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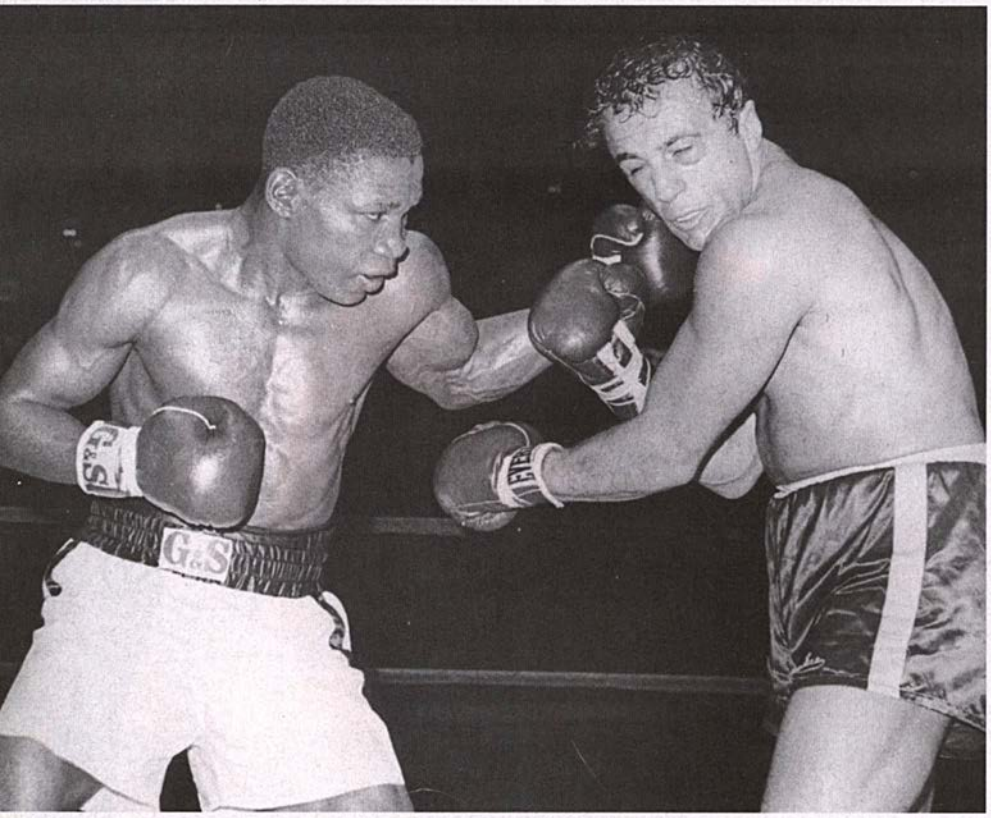
Assigned cutman Jacob "Stitch" Duran (center) and cornermen sit six feet apart while observing a bout in progress inside The Bubble.

COVER PHOTO BY MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

OPENING SHOT

Lightweight Felix Verdejo (right) has been woefully inactive, but he shook off the rust to score a devastating first-round stoppage over Will Madera on July 16 in Las Vegas.



MEMORIES OF TIGER-DEPAULA

I have been an avid boxing fan for 60 years. On October 25, 1968, I was ringside at Madison Square Garden for the Dick Tiger-Frankie DePaula light heavyweight bout. It was the most exciting professional brawl I have ever witnessed, with each fighter knocking down the other twice. DePaula owned the first two knockdowns, and fans screamed for the referee to stop the contest lest Tiger be killed. Afterwards, fans were screaming again for the referee to stop the fight, this time because Tiger had DePaula helpless. In the height of the excitement, my buddy swallowed his cigar butt – lit! The Ring Magazine dubbed it Fight of the Year for 1968.

During this time of coronavirus, fans who love the sport are starved for all things boxing. That is why I hope you will consider reviving one of the sport's greatest moments in your "From the Archives" section.

Vincent J. Cirillo
North Brunswick, N.J.

Editor's response: We couldn't find any of our own photos to use for "From the Archives," but here's a memento of that night from New York Post photographer William N. Jacobellis.

BAD NIGHT FOR JACK

Please help me figure out Jack Dempsey's only knockout loss (Fireman Jim Flynn, first-round KO in February 1917). Jack, at the time, was an unknown. His family needed money. Does it appear that Jack took some money? Truly one of the greatest champions.

Marty Hall

Editor's response: Many fans who attended that bout in Murray, Utah, believed that Dempsey took a dive. Dempsey's first wife supported the allegation, stating exactly what you did: He was young and he needed the money. However, Dempsey went to his grave denying that he threw the fight. He claimed that he was sucker punched by Flynn while extending his arms to touch gloves at the sound of the opening bell. Most newspaper accounts cite that Dempsey was caught cold by a legal punch. It's a plausible scenario. As solid as his chin would prove to be as his career developed, he was still green at the time he faced Flynn, who, while no world-beater, was a veteran of more than 120 bouts and had mixed it up with the best fighters of the era, including Jack Johnson, Sam Langford, Philadelphia Jack O'Brien, Jack Dillon, Billy Papke and Battling Levinsky. Flynn was certainly experienced and wily enough to catch an unfocused Dempsey at the start of a fight. But Dempsey was a fast learner. He returned the favor, stopping Flynn in one round one year later in Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

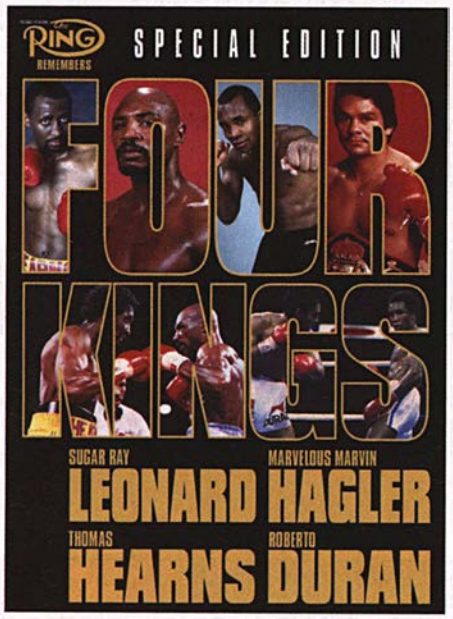
IN MEMORIAM

Jim Strickland passed away on June 3 at the age of 90. Jim was one of the most respected cutmen in boxing. But he was also a great trainer, coach and manager, taking Lee Roy Murphy, William Guthrie and David Diaz to world titles. Strickland worked under legendary trainer Eddie Futch, putting in 65 years of service to the sport of boxing. He worked with 25 world champions and in 75 championship fights. Some of the notable fighters were Evander Holyfield, Leon Spinks, Cory Spinks, Devon Alexander, Jeff Lacy, David Tua, Andrew Golota, Tony Tucker and Fres Oquendo. He was one of the most respected and well-liked men in the boxing community. Strickland was inducted into the Illinois Boxing Hall of Fame in 2016, and the National Boxing Hall of Fame in 2019. It's my hope that one day there's a place for him in Canastota.

Ernie Brown
Corner Man

OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Harry Rusk is wrong in his letter on Sugar Ray Robinson that was published in the July 2020 issue of Ring Magazine. I too have Ring Magazines from 1940 to the present. I am 82 years old. Ray Robinson did lose to Randy Turpin in England, but it was close. Robinson was on a tour of Europe after being on Broadway for some time. In the rematch, Robinson didn't push Turpin to the canvas but tried to get out of the way as Turpin was falling and brushed Ray's gloves, much like Sonny Liston fell with Leotis Martin and much like Ron Lyle did fall with George Foreman. Ray didn't carry Ruby Goldstein as referee for his matches with Turpin or any opponent he faced. Ruby was the premier referee for that time. Ruby got all the major matches to referee by the boxing commission. Randy was offered a third fight but stalled and moved to the light heavyweight division. He had a couple more fights, then later took his life.



Gene Fullmer only won two fights (out of four) with Ray Robinson. One fight, Ray knocked Gene out with a good left hook in the fifth round in Chicago. As for Carmen Basilio, Ray offered Carmen more money for the third bout than Carmen ever was going to make or had made, but Carmen refused (in order) to hold out for more. That case went to court and the judge ruled in Ray's favor. Also, Jim Norris was head of the International Boxing Club and he went along with Ray's offer. Carmen wasn't the champ; Ray was. So a contender takes the short end of the purse.

Also, these fighters weren't afraid of each other. There was no fear factor. The big factor was to make the most money in the twilight of their careers. As for Basilio's size, Harry Rusk wrote that Carmen was half Ray's size. Not true. Carmen was no midget. Smaller, yes, but he was a game fighter. As for Joey Maxim vs. Ray Robinson, the heat got to Ray at 105 degrees under the ring lights and he was exhausted and collapsed. Ray was ahead going into the 12th round like Billy Conn vs Joe Louis. If that Maxim-Robinson fight was held in the fall, Ray would've won with cooler conditions. Give Maxim credit: He was good!

Ray did not dodge anyone, nor was he afraid of anyone. When you fight Jake LaMotta six times, you're not afraid of anyone or King Kong. Ray Robinson was and is still the best ever fighter pound-for-pound.

Richard Prince
Gorham, N.H.

'SPECIAL' THANKS

Months of quarantine and a dearth of big fights – hell, any fights; even two cats would've worked – and my eyes were starved. But, not to fear, The Ring to the rescue. The special edition Four Kings magazine was magnificent and a quality keeper. And then came the Gatti-Ward special issue. Wow. YouTube and Showtime offer plenty of boxing history during a shutdown, but nothing compared to luxurious lingering over these two special issues. Many, many thanks. This is why I subscribe.

Tim Lusch

I began watching boxing in the late '70s when I was 10 or 12 years old, have been what I consider a serious fan of the sport since the early '80s and have been a Ring subscriber for about 30 years. That being said, I find that my interest – or maybe more correctly, my enthusiasm – for boxing has waned an awful lot in the time since HBO got out of the business. From the very beginning, they were the face of boxing for me. Not only had I come to depend on and trust Jim Lampley, Larry Merchant and Harold Lederman like they were family members, but when a big fight was on you knew where to find it: Saturday night at 9:00 on HBO. I understand and appreciate what Al Haymon and PBC are trying to do, but not so much how they're doing it. And streaming? Seriously? Who wants to watch a four-hour fight card on the computer? (Yeah, I'm told you can hook your computer to your TV.) Add it all up, and to me there is a downward spiral to the point that I ask myself, "Why bother?"

Then I read your Gatti-Ward special issue.

Gatti-Ward 1 still stands as the single greatest fight I've ever witnessed (Barrera-Morales 1 and Corrales-Castillo 1 round out my top three). Reliving that brutally spectacular trilogy, showing in a very extreme display what the human heart, will and soul are capable of when mixed with equally extreme toughness, was just what I needed. It reminded me why I became a fan of the sport in the first place.

A fine job, Ring Magazine, and I thank you.

Brian Key
Pineville, Ky.

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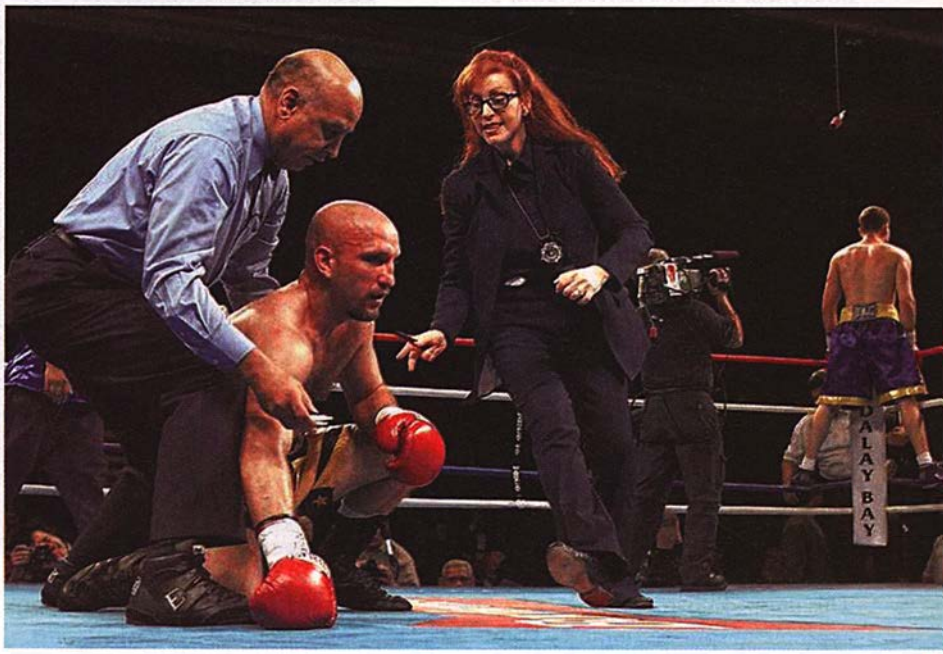
WHERE IS BOXING IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC?



Let me begin by stating I'm not an epidemiologist. I'm not an infectious disease specialist. And I'm no longer faced with working as a combat sports physician. However, as a neurologist and head of an anti-doping organization trying to keep boxing clean and safe, I'm having to navigate a pandemic the best I can.

We each have stories of those we know – perhaps family, friends, colleagues or even ourselves – who have suffered from or were exposed to coronavirus/COVID-19. Nevertheless, even for those crazies who do not believe the pandemic exists, it continues to drastically change our lives.

What about professional boxing? Should we be scheduling fights? Are the fights that have been held sufficiently protecting the athletes, their cornermen and the officials?

Dr. Margaret Goodman has been involved in boxing in multiple capacities since 1993.

Holding events is a prospective study. Meaning: We are in the midst of an evolving, unprecedented situation as we collect data on what works and what doesn't. We can't rely on hindsight, as this is an ever-changing process with new statistics and medical information coming to light on a daily basis. Only at the conclusion of the pandemic will we be able to look back and see which actions were right and which were giant unforced errors.

What we do know:

1. Nothing is 100 percent. Whatever we have heard today regarding COVID-19 statistics and disease course may change tomorrow. Unlike the flu or common cold, COVID-19

can be asymptomatic – it can make you an unknowing carrier without symptoms or land you in the hospital in respiratory distress or make your blood hypercoagulable (thick) and cause a stroke.

2. Although we are late to the party, wearing a mask AND being around others wearing some sort of facial covering, along with social distancing, substantially reduces the likelihood of spreading or contracting the disease. Respiratory droplets transferred from one individual to another are the main mode of spread. This is probably why more and more socializing healthy people under 40 are now becoming ill.

3. Theories that COVID-19 is only transferred in the blood or that just covering your mouth is sufficient are absurd and 100 percent untrue. The virus can enter the body through the mouth, nose or eyes.

4. Testing negative one day doesn't mean you won't test positive the next! This is especially true if your last exposure to someone with the virus was in the last few days. Ideally, tests should be performed 5-7 days after a potential exposure.

5. Yes, comorbidities like diabetes, obesity and lung disease can increase risks for experiencing severe COVID-19 disease.

6. Some studies indicate that genetic factors or specific blood types may be protective.

7. Unlike other coronaviruses, COVID-19 can result in chronic lung damage (especially hurtful to an athlete). This lung damage may not even include obvious symptoms like shortness of breath.

8. No one truly knows yet if antibodies fully protect against recurrent infections. And if they do, how many antibodies does one need to have and for how long?

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

9. It can take 2-14 days after exposure to test positive or develop symptoms, but five days is the average.

How has boxing done so far?

The Nevada State Athletic Commission and executive director Bob Bennett have done a terrific job holding events. Aggressive repeated testing and placing the athletes in the Closed System Event (CSE), or "bubble," from arrival to the end of the event may make boxers the least likely to be infected compared with the general population. Per Bennett: "NSAC's robust protocols in concert with operational plans from promoters like Top Rank have been a great success. You must continue to be consistent, vigilant and follow the scientific data."

Andy Foster, the respected California State Athletic Commission executive director, began having fights on July 24. He agrees with the "bubble" philosophy. "In some ways, the hardest part of the process is to be patient," notes Foster. "We don't have to be first, but we have to be right. There's no guarantee. People can get this (COVID-19) in a lot of places. What we are doing is a mitigation strategy."

Foster believes the earlier testing begins, the less chance there is in bringing a fighter who's infected or could infect others into a venue. I believe that promoters should begin testing fighters once they sign a boxer to a card. Yes, there are false negatives and false positives, but that can be handled. Only asking questions about symptoms or taking regular temperatures is inadequate. In fact, recent studies are demonstrating that loss of sense of smell can be the hallmark – even more so than a fever!

This places significant pressure on promoters. Not too many can afford to bring fighters in this early. Where do you house everyone so they are isolated from one another for as long as possible? This must include the officials, who experience equal exposure and perhaps even more if they are healthcare providers.

Top referees Robert Hoyle and Tony Weeks officiated at The Bubble in Las Vegas.

If a commission does not have adequate personnel or the promotion can't afford to conduct measures to protect all involved, then the card shouldn't take place. Anything less places everyone at risk, including when they travel home. I am aware that at least one U.S. event took place with no testing and limited precautions. That's shameful and another reason why the lack of uniformity among commissions is itself a health risk.

Even more than before, bringing boxing back is a team sport. Robert Smith, executive secretary for the British Boxing Board of Control, agrees: "(This) could not be done without the input of doctors, but also I am pleased that the promoters who have chosen to promote under these conditions have understood the reasons for the protocols in place."

The BBBoC has perhaps the most detailed requirements and conditions that must be followed at all times by everyone involved, including PPE (personal protective equipment) specific to their role at the event.

Bennett adds, "You have to be flexible, adaptable and conscientious in an effort to bring boxing back to our fans. Nevada's security measures ensure all individuals remain in the CSE. If an individual violates their protocols and/or tests positive, immediate action is taken."

With few gyms open and limited sparring, will fighters be adequately prepared to compete? Is there a benefit to the shutdown? My neurologist hat tells me that less sparring – especially for an experienced fighter – is actually a good thing. That doesn't mean that fighters shouldn't train, but limited headshots in the gym lessens brain-injury risks.

We still need a clean sport. Up until March 1, the Voluntary Anti-Doping Association (VADA), the organization I head up, performed 40-50 anti-doping tests per month – some were urine only, some blood and urine. During the first two months of COVID-19, those numbers decreased to 10-15 per month, mostly due to travel restrictions. Many doping collections officers (DCOs), healthcare professionals themselves, needed to remain in the hospital to care for COVID-19 patients. They have each been tested for the virus to ensure they're healthy prior to accepting assignments.

VADA requires significant precautions for our DCOs over and above CDC recommendations. Tested fighters are questioned regarding COVID-19 exposure via cell before our arrival. The DCOs wear protective gear, athletes are tested wearing masks, and we maintain as much social distance as possible. Some boxers are appropriately nervous about having anyone in their home, so we test at requested locations.

As of June 1, VADA offers free COVID-19 self-administered saliva active virus tests (PCR) and antibody screening to our fighters. The active virus tests are forwarded to SMRTL, the WADA-accredited lab in Salt Lake City, with a 24-48-hour turnaround. The antibody tests are immediate and can be performed by the athlete during the drug test.

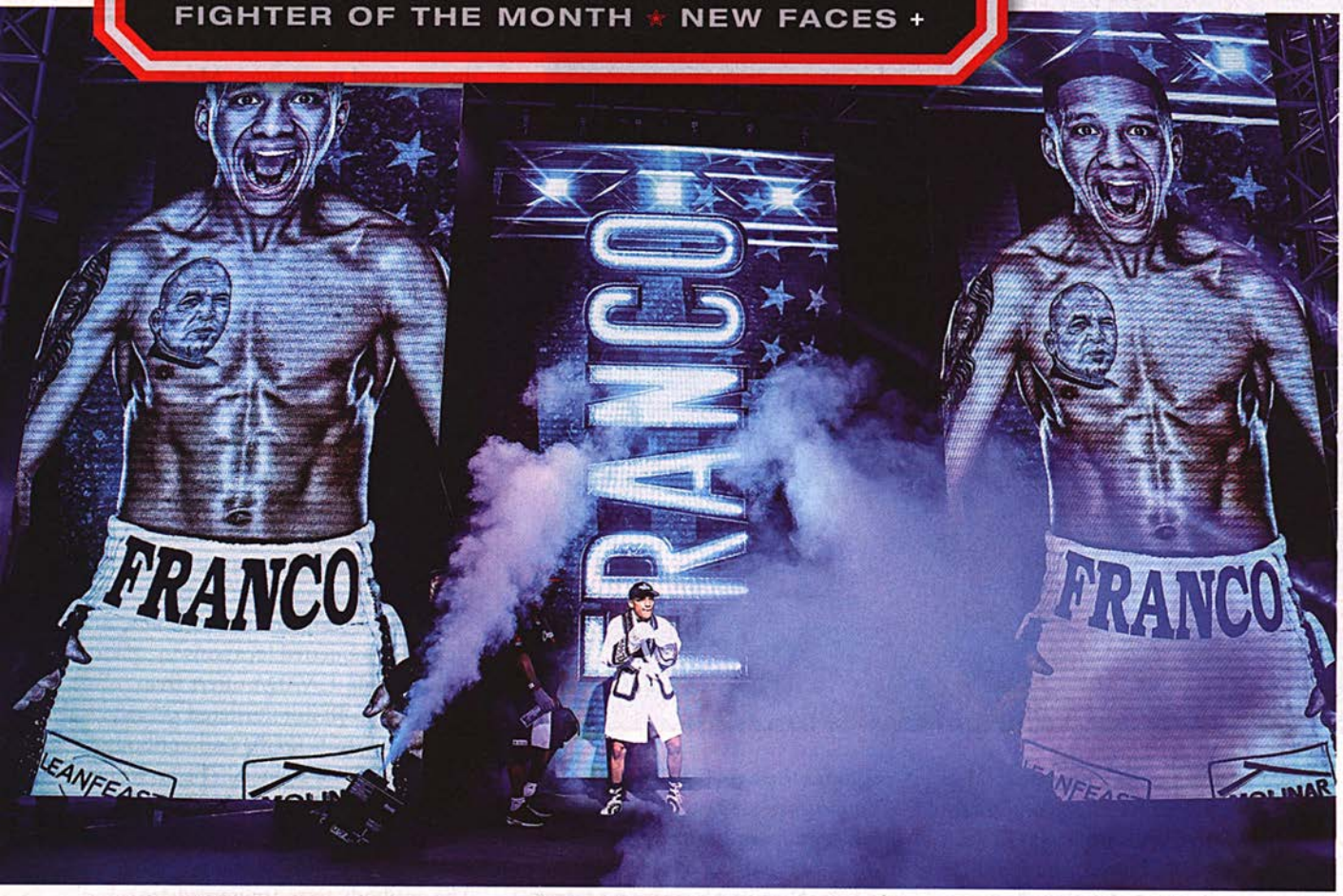
Until we have a safe vaccine, there will continue to be unknowns, more cases and probably more deaths. So do the best you can. Follow CDC recommendations of social distancing, wearing facial covering when in public places, wash your hands frequently, stop touching your face and seek medical attention should you develop a cough, fever, loss of smell or taste, headache, shortness of breath or new medical symptoms. And finally, STOP holding onto the absurd belief that COVID-19 isn't serious – it is!

Nina T. Harawa, PhD, MPH, epidemiologist and professor at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA contributed to the editing of this column.

ROUND 1

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH ★ NEW FACES +

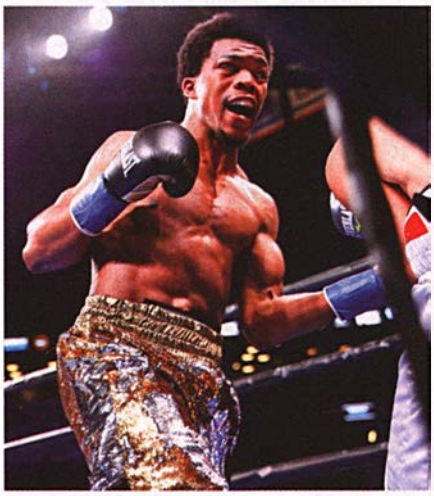
FIGHTER OF THE MONTH



JOSHUA FRANCO

Franco had a lot to prove going into his matchup against undefeated Australian Andrew Moloney.

While there wasn't a lot to choose from for Fighter of the Month honors, Joshua Franco's 12-round unanimous decision victory over previously unbeaten Australian Andrew Moloney was impressive. The 24-year-old Franco (17-1-2, 8 knockouts) entered the ring at The Bubble inside the MGM Grand in Las Vegas as a significant underdog. However, the San Antonio, Texas, native tore up the script with a polished and disciplined display that established him as one of the top junior bantamweights in the world. Moloney, who was making his U.S. debut while taking part in his third fight under the Top Rank umbrella, is a class act. He got off to a strong start, but Franco began to impose his offense as the visitor spent large portions of the middle rounds on the back foot. An earnest attempt to regain a foothold in Round 10 backfired on Moloney, 29, when he was stunned and cut by a quick combination, and the affable Australian was decked by a flurry in the following session. It was a hard-fought contest, but the better man won by close tallies of 115-112, 114-113 and 114-113. Franco's lone defeat came against Lucas Emanuel Fernandez in March 2018 when, after flooring Fernandez in Round 1 and building a lead on the scorecards, he was stopped in the ninth. Three fights against bantamweight contender Oscar Negrete resulted in a pair of split draws and a close points win, but there has been significant improvement since then. This career-best performance proves it. The victory saw Franco claim the WBA "regular" title at 115 pounds, which is unrecognized by this publication (Roman Gonzalez wears the recognized WBA belt), but, more importantly, he grabbed the No. 6 spot in The Ring's junior bantamweight ratings, which was previously occupied by the man he defeated. Moloney (21-1, 14 KOs) has time to bounce back and has exercised his contractual right to an immediate rematch.



140-pound prospect Gary Antuanne Russell has boxing in his DNA.

STEPHANIE TRAPP/TRAPPFOTOS

NEW FACES

GARY ANTUANNE RUSSELL

By **Anson Wainwright**

Age: 24
Hometown: Capitol Heights, Maryland
Weight class: junior welterweight
Height: 5 feet 8 inches
Amateur record: 111-9
Turned pro: 2017
Pro record: 13-0 (13 KOs)
Trainer: Gary Allen Russell Sr.
Manager: Gary Allen Russell Sr.
Promoter: Al Haymon
Instagram: @garyarussell

BEST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Russell is pleased with his most recent fight in late February, a first-round knockout of Mexican journeyman Jose Marrufo. It took place on the undercard of big brother Gary Russell Jr.'s WBC featherweight title defense against Tugstsogt Nyambayar in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

"The fight went exactly as planned," the southpaw Russell told The Ring. "I watched footage on the guy and he was aggressive. He was never put in a position where he had to step back and take a second thought on what he was doing. We turned him to our right-hand side – he's an orthodox fighter; everything he threw hard was going to come from his right side. He didn't move his head a lot. He only comes straight forward, and we practiced on making him reset himself.

"He was a shorter opponent; he squats a lot, and he squatted right into an uppercut. That's how I finished him. Everything that [I'd practiced] in the gym came to fruition."

WORST NIGHT OF PRO CAREER AND WHY: Russell has won all 13 fights to date – all inside the distance and none past the fourth round. But he is a perfectionist, and even when things go according to plan, he feels there are small details that could be improved upon.

"That's a difficult question to answer," he said when asked about his least-favorite win. "In all reality, I believe even my last fight, I gave that a rating as my best performance, but I felt there were things I missed out on. I wish I would have waited and not got him out in the first round. But the opportunity showed itself. Why play with fire? Put it out while it's small. But there's still more I could have done."

NEXT FIGHT: Russell fought just before the lockdown, so he didn't have a fight canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He is a gym rat, and although he has had to stay away from the family-run gym, he is staying in shape working out at home. Russell is very talented and has a high ceiling; the feeling is that he is ready for a step up in competition.

WHY HE'S A PROSPECT: Russell was a standout amateur. He made history when he won the 2014 national Golden Gloves welterweight title.

"Winning the Golden Gloves was special for me and my family," he explained. "A group of three brothers who won the national Golden Gloves, it was a record held for 90 years. There's never been four brothers right up until I fought in the Golden Gloves and won."

The 24-year-old had aspirations of following his brothers and becoming an Olympian, but that dream was nearly shattered in 2015 when he lost on the first night of the qualifiers in Reno, Nevada. Only Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones Jr., Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Gary Russell Jr. had ever come from the loser's bracket to earn a berth on the team.

"I fought Jaron Ennis and lost to him by one point," he said. "I had to fight six times, and in the sixth fight I had to fight the person I lost to (Ennis) and beat him. And once I beat him, I had to fight him one more time." Russell won that fight as well.

He then ran the gauntlet at the AIBA qualifying tournament in Baku, Azerbaijan, but broke his right hand along the way. Still, Russell made the U.S. team and won his first two fights in Rio before losing a controversial split decision to eventual gold medalist Fazliddin Gaibnazarov.

As one of four brothers who have boxed professionally and the son of his trainer, Russell has fighting in his blood. In addition to training with his siblings, he has gained invaluable experience in high-class sparring sessions with Shakur Stevenson and Amir Imam.

Russell is technically sound and wields top-rate skills and power, but he feels his biggest strength is the ability to adapt in battle.

"I believe I'm very versatile," he said. "All fighters have to have a sense of versatility, otherwise their career's going to be limited. Even though there is a game plan implemented, you have to be able to make the changes on the fly."

WHY HE'S A SUSPECT: Russell feels there are a few areas in which he needs to further hone his craft.

"I need to improve my I.Q., my speed, and I need to improve my endurance," he said. "Make no mistake, I'm a work in progress. A lot of people think I'm good, but I say, 'I'm OK.' I'm more humble about it."

Power hasn't been an issue so far, but what about if he meets somebody who won't go down early? Russell is confident that when the time arrives, he will be able to push forward and get the win.

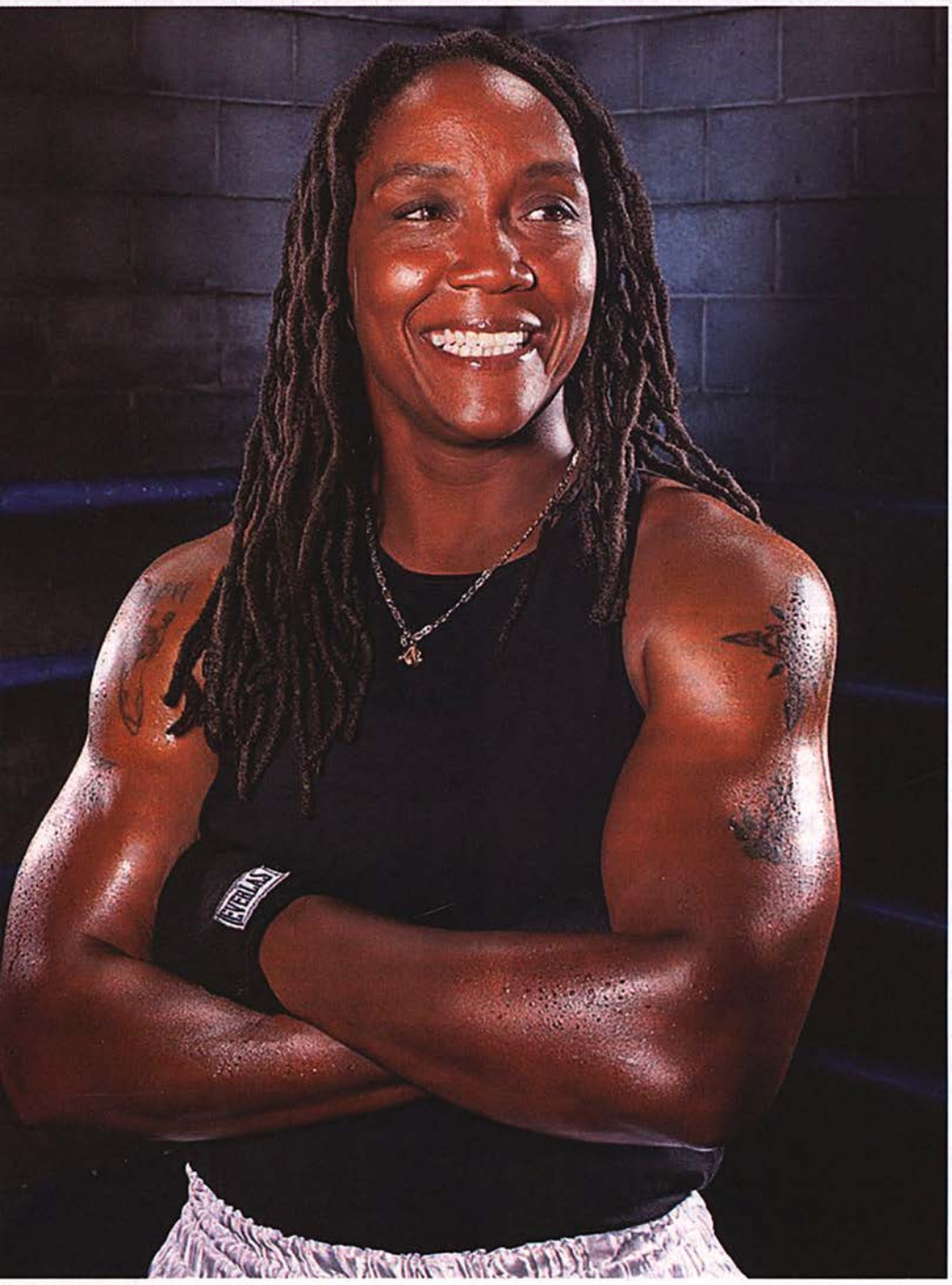
"I respond to it like an athlete should respond," he said. "OK, you took my shot. We'll see if you can take this one and I'll keep giving it to you until you quit."

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

STAR-STRUCK



ESPN's 10-part series *The Last Dance* chronicled Michael Jordan's greatness as a basketball player and showed him against a series of rivals. One of these rivals was Reggie Miller, the Indiana Pacers superstar known for trash talking with adversaries as diverse as Jordan and New York Knicks uberfan Spike Lee.

I saw a different side of Miller at an HBO party before a fight in Las Vegas in 2004. I was talking with Ann Wolfe, known to HBO viewers as James Kirkland's trainer and one of the most ferocious punchers in women's boxing. Earlier in the year, she'd scored a devastating first-round knockout of highly touted Vonda Ward – a 6-foot-6, 18-0 fighter who'd played basketball at the University of Tennessee.

Wolfe came from particularly hard origins. "My father was a murderer and a drug dealer," she once said. "He loved me, but that doesn't change what he did." She'd dropped out of school in seventh grade and later acknowledged, "I could write my name, but I couldn't read at all. I lived in a house with no running water, no heat. My whole life, everybody picked on me."

Ann Wolfe's journey has taken her from puncher to teacher.

BOB MARTIN

Wolfe's spectacular knockout of Vonda Ward has become a YouTube mainstay.

Boxing was her salvation.

"I love boxing because it's the only thing I've ever done in my whole life that I was good at," Wolfe told one interviewer. "A lot of people don't like me to say it, but I truly like to knock people unconscious, out cold and flat on their back or stomach. I'll fight you till I die and it's over."

"This is a savage, murderous sport," Wolfe said on another occasion. "We're punching each other in the damn head. If you ain't trying to kill somebody, why the hell are you punching people in the head until you make them unconscious?"

But Wolfe had a charming side. And at times she was like a kid. Now, at the HBO party ...

"Omigod!" she exclaimed. "At that table over there. It's Reggie Miller."

So I looked. And yes, it was Reggie Miller in conversation with a friend.

"Omigod!" Wolfe said again. "He's my favorite player."

"Would you like to meet him?" I asked.

"Omigod! (that was her third 'omigod') Yes."

I'd never met Reggie Miller before. But with nothing to lose, I brought Wolfe over to his table.

"Excuse me, Mr. Miller. I apologize for intruding. But this is Ann Wolfe. She's a huge fan of yours and just wanted to say hello."

Then the unexpected happened. Miller stood up.

"I know who you are," he said with a warm, welcoming smile. "I saw what you did to that basketball player. That was amazing. All props to you."

Wolfe looked as though she'd died and gone to heaven. They chatted for a minute or two. Then, not wanting to overstay her welcome, she excused herself.

"He was so nice," she told me afterward. "He made me feel like I'm somebody."

★★★

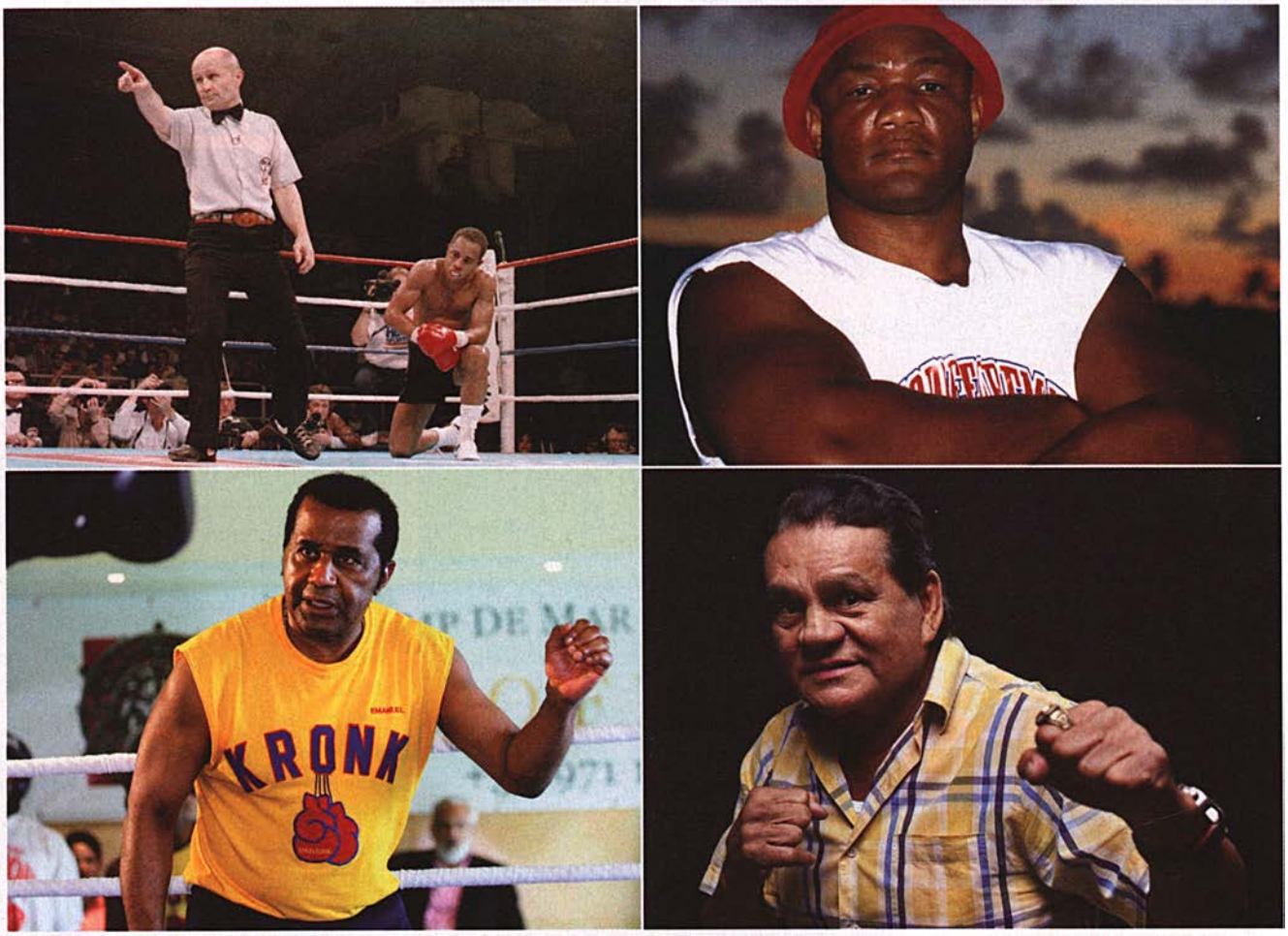
***Championship Rounds* – a** collection of columns by Bernard Fernandez, the much-decorated former boxing writer for the Philadelphia Daily News – is characterized by the insight and professionalism that have marked his writing for decades.

The first piece – a profile of referee Mills Lane, who was horribly incapacitated by a stroke at age 64 – signals to the reader that there will be interesting nuggets ahead.

"The patrician scion of a Southern dynasty in Savannah, Georgia," Fernandez writes, "young Mills hailed from a banking family. How wealthy were the Lanes? Well, the Mills B. Lane House in historic downtown Savannah, completed in 1907, was hailed as a jewel of the antebellum South when it was placed on the market in 2007 with an asking price of $7.6 million. It seems a safe bet that no other referee was raised in a mansion that boasted a marble entrance, Corinthian columns, parquet floors, 29 handcrafted canvas murals, nine fireplaces, five bedrooms, eight full baths, three half-baths, and a large in-ground pool."

Looking back on James "Buster" Douglas' journey to Tokyo to fight Mike Tyson, Fernandez recalls, "The skinny-dipping girl swimmer in the opening scenes of *Jaws* stood a better chance against the Great White Shark than poor Buster did against Tyson." But Buster, in Bernard's words, became "the greatest conqueror named Douglas to set foot on Japanese soil since General MacArthur."

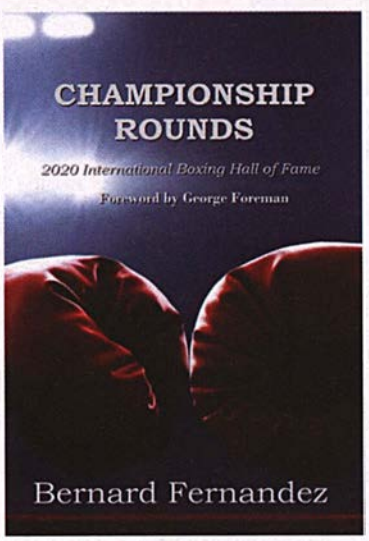
Fernandez also has an ear for good quotes. Some of my favorites in *Championship Rounds* are:



- **Seamus McDonagh** (on his knockout defeat at the hands of a vastly superior Evander Holyfield in 1990): "Your whole sense of self-worth can be completely smashed."

- **Former junior middleweight contender Tony Ayala** (while serving 15 years in prison after being convicted on multiple criminal charges relating to a particularly brutal rape): "Tonight, I'll go to sleep in a prison cell. Tomorrow morning, I'll wake up in a prison cell. That is my present situation, and all I can do is make the most of it. At some point, I'll be free and have a job. And I'll deal with that too."

- **George Foreman:** "I went into the Job Corps because the last job I had paid me minimum wage, $1.25 an hour. But I never saw that extra quarter. They were only paying me a dollar an hour. I was hoping that, if I got some training at the Job Corps, I could get up to $2.50, maybe even three dollars an hour."



- **Emanuel Steward** (on Wladimir Klitschko): "I've trained many fighters. And Wladimir is one of the few who can turn out the lights without using the dimmer switch first."

- **Roberto Duran** (dismissing the obvious signs that age had robbed him of his skill as a fighter): "I will fight and I will win for as long as I care to because I am Duran."

Championship Rounds is an entertaining read.

Clockwise, from top left: referee Mills Lane, George Foreman, Roberto Duran and trainer Emanuel Steward.

★ ★ ★

On Saturday, June 6, a 13-bout combat sports card took place in Abilene, Kansas. According to BoxRec.com, the event consisted of eight regular boxing matches, two bare-knuckle fights, two kickboxing fights and one MMA bout.

Organizers had planned to hold the fights at Forbes Field in Topeka but moved them to the Never Surrender MMA Gym in Abilene at the last minute because of problems with the Topeka facility. Promoter John Carden of Carden Combat Sports said it was the first professional fight card held in Abilene since 1919. Fans were not allowed on-site. The event was streamed on Fite and cost viewers $12.99. A source at Fite says that the stream engendered roughly 500 buys.

In the main event, Shawn Simpson (12-0, 4 KOs) knocked out Dakota Laster (3-10-1, 3 KOs, 9 KO losses) in the first round. The three fighters who Laster has beaten have been knocked out in every one of their 12 fights.

In the co-feature, Desmond Jarmon (9-0, 5 KOs) knocked out Mike Fowler (7-28, 2 KOs, 14 KO losses). Fowler has now lost 27 of his last 29 fights.

If the fights were bad, the medical protocols were worse.

The rules and regulations of the Kansas Athletic Commission require fighters to submit a negative report from an HIV test taken within six months preceding their scheduled fight. That's all. No MRI. No blood or urine test for performance-enhancing drugs. The grant of a license to compete (which can be valid for multiple fights) requires other cursory testing.

The Rules and Regulations further state, "A physician whose sole purpose is to conduct physical examinations of applicants [fighters] shall not be required to be licensed by the commission." One physician (chosen by the promoter) is assigned to each fight card.

And what other steps did the Kansas Athletic Commission take to deal with the COVID-19 crisis?

Two weeks before the event, fighters scheduled to be on the card were asked to fill out a coronavirus participation questionnaire. Then, at the weigh-in, their temperature was taken.

The Kansas Athletic Commission website proudly states, "For promoters, Kansas has never been more open for business or ready for promotions to come into the state. The commission has gone to great lengths to make our process as easy as possible and have developed several initiatives designed to help make our state more promoter-friendly."

State commissions must do better during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Association of Boxing Commissions should explore its options regarding the Kansas Athletic Commission.

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – A Dangerous Journey: Another Year Inside Boxing – was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored him with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. Hauser will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame with the Class of 2020.

READY TO RUMBLE

THE FACE OF BOXING

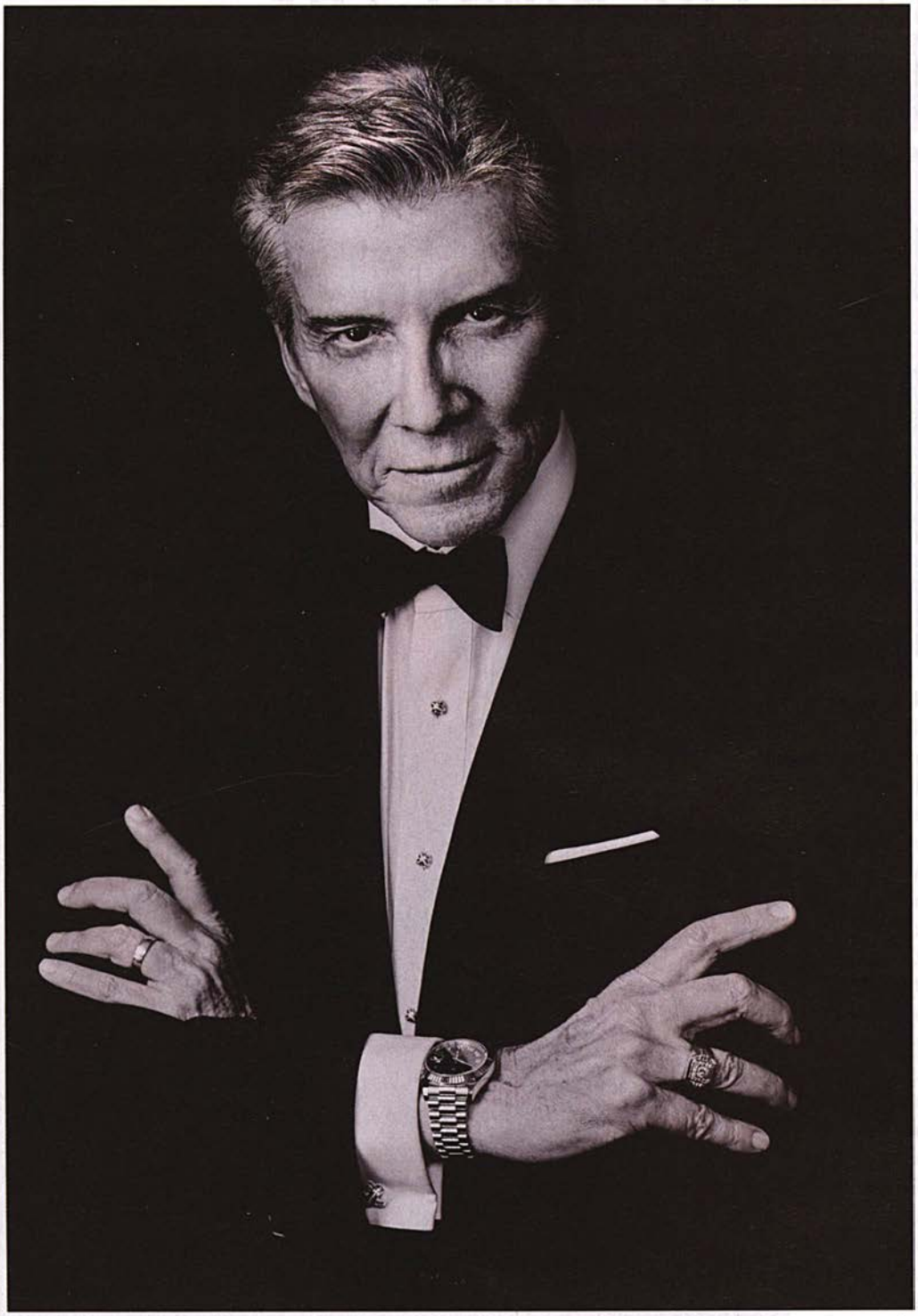
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WOJTEK URBANEK**
TEXT BY **THOMAS HAUSER**

Ring announcing has changed. For a hundred years, choosing the ring announcer was an afterthought to setting up a promotion. Then, in the 1980s, a used-car salesman and part-time male model named Michael Buffer took up the craft to supplement his income.

Buffer is now boxing royalty, better-known than all but a handful of fighters in the world today and the gold standard by which ring announcers are judged. His presence confers legitimacy on a fight, making it seem bigger and more important than would otherwise be the case. His signature phrase – "LET'S GET R-R-R-READY TO RUMBL-L-L-L-E" – has become part of the pageantry of boxing. He has plied his trade in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania. And he's a brand unto himself. Retail sales of products licensing "Let's get ready to rumble" stand near the $500 million mark.

David Diamante heads the next generation of ring announcers. But he has a markedly different look.

DAVID DIAMANTE



Buffer is James Bond, walking into the casino and sitting down at a high-stakes baccarat game, elegantly dressed and meticulously groomed with every hair in place.

Diamante is the anti-Bond. Tall and slender with a gaunt face, aquiline nose and piercing blue eyes, he has dreadlocks that extend well below his waist and, unbraided, would reach to the floor. He started growing them in 1988 and hasn't cut them since.

"I'm not a stupid guy," Diamante says. "I know I could cut my hair and make more money. But I'm not motivated by money and, right now, I like my hair the way it is. Maybe I'll wake up one morning and cut it because I want to."

Like Buffer, Diamante has a voice that's a gift of nature. And he uses it well. His trademark phrase – "The fight starts now," intoned as a guttural snarl – evokes boxing's essence as a combat sport.

"On the surface, Michael and David are very different," photographer Wojtek Urbanek says. "But in other ways, they're quite similar. The thing that impressed me most about Michael was how professional and easy to work with he is. He was friendly from the moment we shook hands and respectful of every suggestion I made. David was the same way. They have very different images. But David is just as much of a perfectionist as Michael."

And there's another similarity that they share.

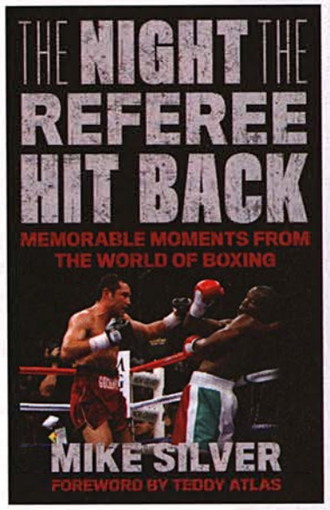
"It's about the fights, not the ring announcer," Diamante notes. To which Buffer adds, "I always remember that the fighters are the stars. The cheers are for them, not me." RING

Wojtek Urbanek is based in New York and can be reached at studio@wojtekurbanek.com. Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com.

LITERARY NOTES:

THE NIGHT THE REFEREE HIT BACK

BOOK REVIEW BY **THOMAS HAUSER**



The Night the Referee Hit Back (Rowman & Littlefield) is a collection of 23 essays about boxing written by Mike Silver augmented by the transcripts of interviews that Silver conducted with five fighters.

Silver is a reliable historian and an ardent spokesperson for boxing's past. He looks back fondly on the time when the sweet science was "a relevant part of the social fabric" of America and had "the capacity to address issues involving history, ideology, violence, politics, gender and race" (as evidenced by Jack Johnson, Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali). "No other sport," Silver states, "can make that claim."

But Silver is a harsh critic of contemporary boxing. The essays in his current book return again and again to the theme voiced in *The Arc of Boxing* (his first book about the sport).

Simply put, Silver believes that boxing is a lost art and today's fighters are vastly inferior to those who plied their trade during "The Golden Age of Boxing" (which he identifies as the 1920s through the 1950s with a nod to a handful of fighters in the 1960s and '70s). He states – correctly, I believe – that too few fighters at the top of the food chain today are willing to go in tough and thus don't learn the lessons that come from fighting the best. He also has a low regard for contemporary trainers and writes, "If 95 percent of today's trainers showed up at Stillman's, they would be laughed out of the gym or assigned as bucket carriers since that low-level job would result in them doing the least damage."

"Boxing technique has fallen to its lowest level in over one hundred years," Silver laments. "The art of boxing as I knew it is dead and unlikely to be revived anytime soon."

There are two components to writing history: (1) getting the facts right and (2) interpreting the facts. Silver is a reliable reporter of fact. But there are times when I take issue with his interpretation.

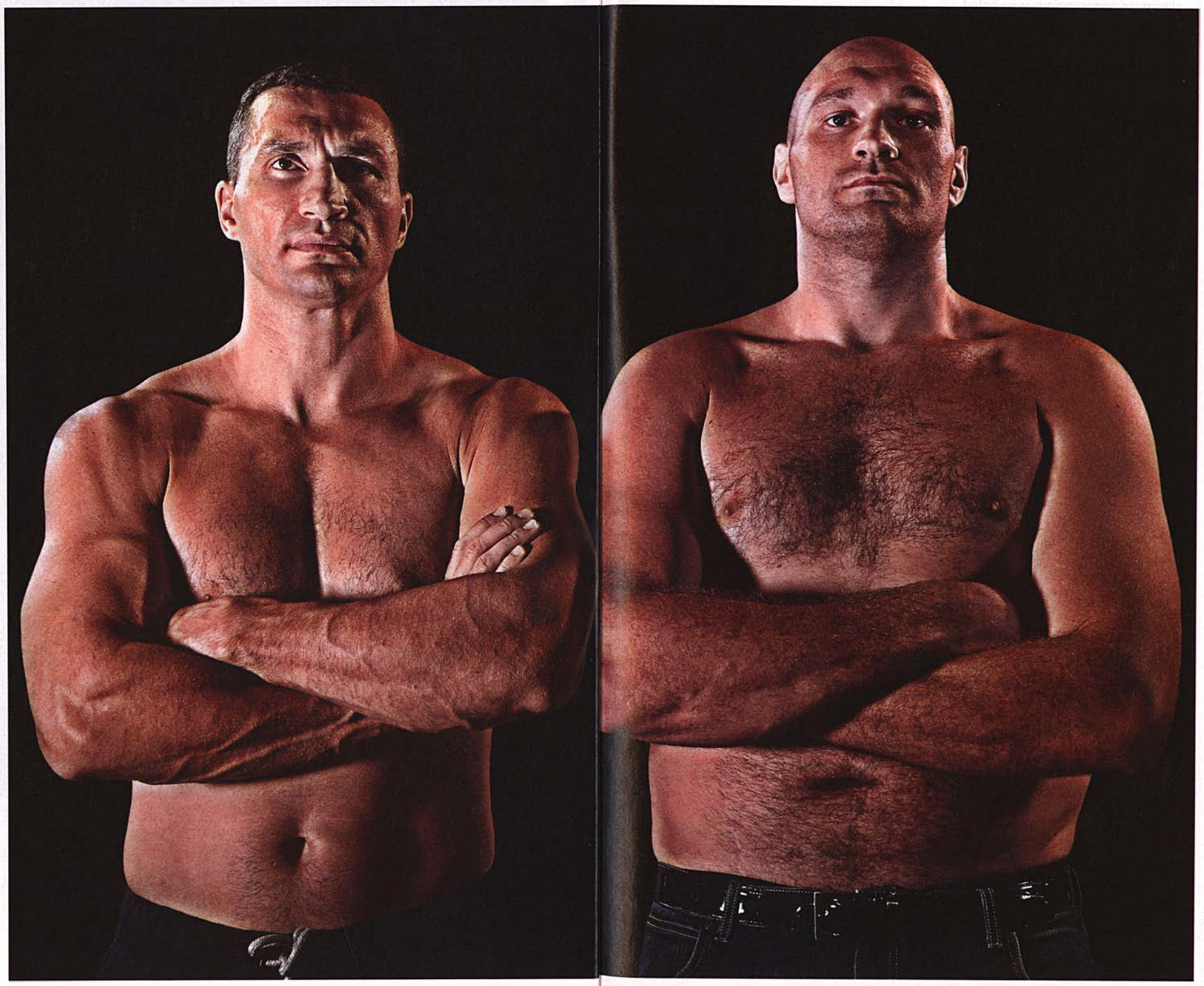
When I read *The Arc of Boxing* 12 years ago, I felt that Silver and the "panel of experts" he quoted approvingly went overboard in glamorizing the past and denigrating contemporary fighters. I simply didn't agree that Tami Mauriello at 190 pounds would have knocked out Lennox Lewis or that Tommy Loughran at 185 pounds would have outpointed Mike Tyson. Nor did I think that Bernard Hopkins in the 1950s would have been nothing more than a "good journeyman" or a "main event fighter in the small clubs."

These differences of opinion are rekindled by *The Night the Referee Hit Back*. The essays fall primarily into one of two categories – either an appreciative look at boxing's past or a not-so-appreciative look at the way things are now.

The first essay – "Boxing in Olde New York: Unforgettable Stillman's Gym" – is the best in the book. But there are too many instances where Silver idealizes the past.

For example, Silver notes the similarity in height and weight between Wladimir Klitschko and Jess Willard (who Jack Dempsey obliterated in three rounds) and concludes, "I have no doubt that Dempsey's superior speed and punching power would be the deciding factor in achieving the same result against Klitschko."

With regard to Klitschko vs. Tyson Fury, Silver writes, "The overall



Tyson Fury versus Wladimir Klitschko was a disappointing fight in terms of finesse.

SASCHA STEINBACH/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

incompetence, amateurishness and lack of fighting spirit of both contestants was astounding. I could not believe what I was seeing. That was the last straw for me. I figuratively threw in the towel on my once-favorite sport. I really don't care if I never see another contemporary boxing match again."

I agree that Klitschko-Fury was a dreadful fight. But it was no worse than Jack Sharkey against Primo Carnera, Max Baer against James Braddock and many other heavyweight championship fights from "the golden age of boxing."

Similarly, Silver proclaims, "If a prime Ted Lowry were fighting today, I have no doubt he could easily whip the current cruiserweight, light heavyweight and heavyweight champions in consecutive weeks."

Lowry is best known for having lost a dubious 10-round decision to Rocky Marciano in 1949. He never fought above 184 pounds and compiled a career record of 70 wins, 68 losses and 10 draws.

Silver is on solid ground when he writes, "Once upon a time, winning a world championship was a rare and venerated achievement. It really meant something. Today every boxer, it seems, is wearing some kind of goofy title belt." But there are times when Silver says things that I think are just plain wrong and, in any event, impossible to verify (such as his contention that the 1977 fight between Muhammad Ali and Earnie Shavers "caused more head trauma [to Ali] than all three Frazier bouts put together").

Also, in comparing contemporary fighters with the past, let's remember that another reason there are fewer great fighters today is that there are fewer fighters. In the 1920s and 1930s, there were 10,000-12,000 boxers licensed at any given time in the United States. Now the total is closer to 2,500. So multiply today's numbers by four. Suppose you had four Terence Crawfords, four Errol Spences, four Vasyl Lomachenkos, four Canelo Alvarezes, four Naoya Inoues and so on down the line in each of their respective weight divisions. All of a sudden, 2020 might look like a remarkable time for boxing.

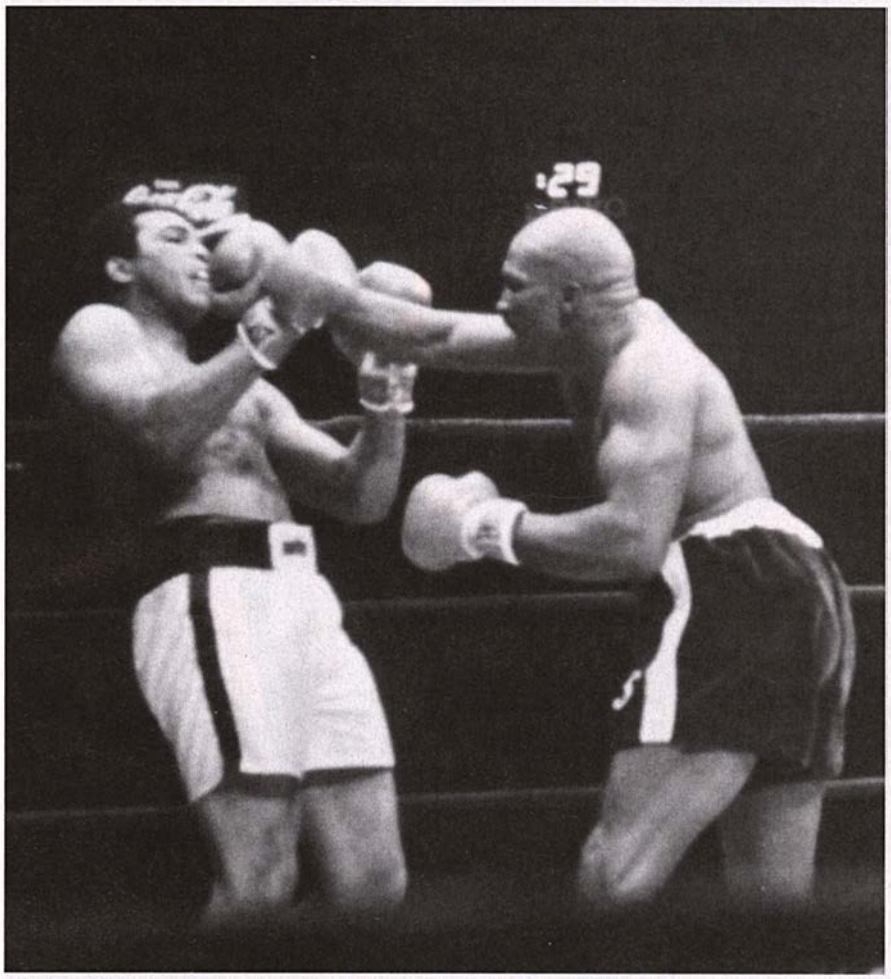
The essay in *The Night the Referee Hit Back* that will cause the most controversy is entitled "The Myth of 'The Thrilla in Manila.'"

Silver respects Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier for the fighters they once were. And he acknowledges that Ali-Frazier I was a great fight. He begins to misfire when, writing of Ali-Frazier II, he states, "Ali was gifted with a 12-round decision that many fans and sportswriters thought he lost." But the overwhelming majority of fans and sportswriters thought Ali won. There were times when the judges were overly kind to Muhammad. Ali-Frazier II wasn't one of them.

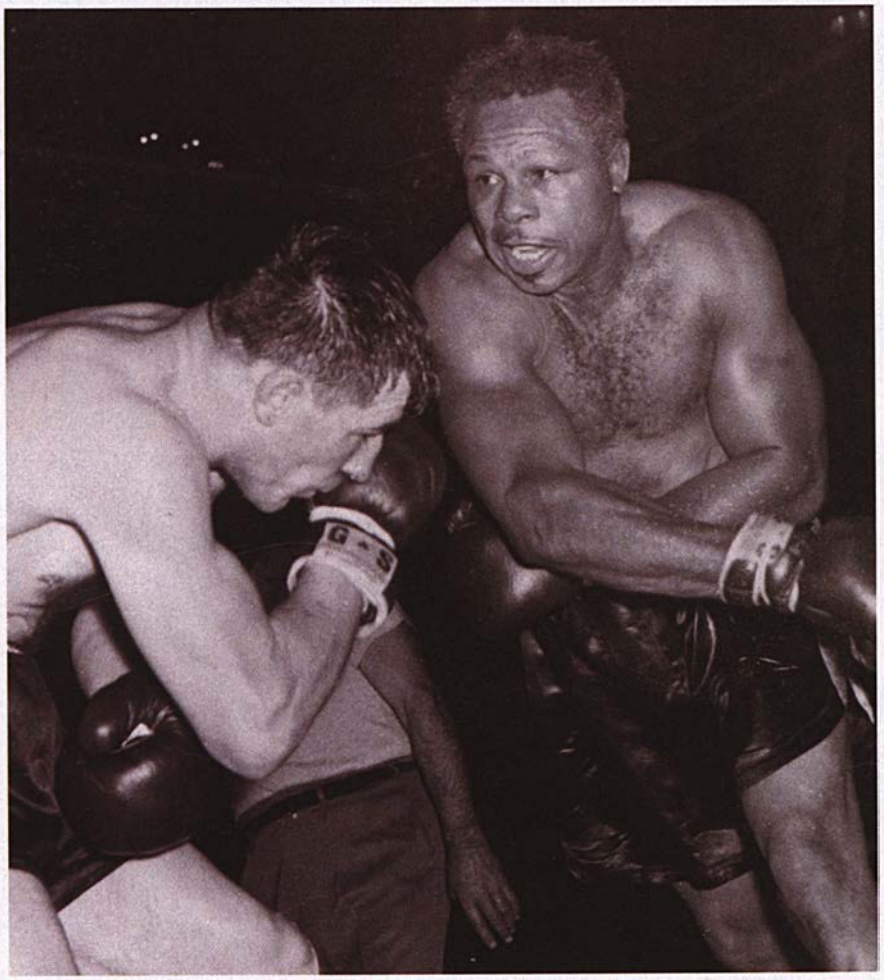
Silver then calls Ali-Frazier III "the most overrated boxing match in the history of the sport" and adds, "To accurately evaluate 'The Thrilla in Manila' based strictly on its merits as a prizefight is to come to the conclusion that it was no better or worse than a good tough club fight.

"There is a sloppy quality to the efforts of both men as they take their turns meting out punishment," Silver writes. "Many fans, still enthralled by the myth of 'The Thrilla in Manila,' love to refer to the 'ebb and flow' of a great fight. In this fight, the 'ebb and flow' becomes all too predictable. When a tiring Ali

Muhammad Ali's final successful title defense came against Earnie Shavers.



decides to 'ebb' against the ropes, he allows Frazier to 'flow' for up to a full minute without returning any meaningful counterpunch. When Ali is rested enough to come off the ropes, he will 'flow' back for 10 or 15 seconds with a few swift arm punches before returning to the relative safety of the rope-a-dope. By the middle rounds, with the pattern of the fight firmly established and the possibility of a sudden ending very remote, a fan who understood what was really going on could have walked out to the concession stand for a hot dog and beer, returned to his seat several minutes later and be unconcerned about having missed anything important."



Archie Moore got off the floor three times to beat Yvon Durelle in 1958.

BETTMANN

Silver concedes that, in Manila, Ali and Frazier "displayed the fighting spirit and never-surrender attitude that is the inner core of every great champion." But he then remarks, "To say it was a great fight because of this battle of wills is to see only one aspect of a fight that, when viewed in its totality, was seriously flawed. What if the fighters involved were not named Ali and Frazier but instead were two heavyweight contenders named 'Smith' and 'Jones'? Same fight, just different names. Would 'The Thrilla' still be remembered today as a great fight?"

My answer to that question is "yes." Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward weren't elite fighters. But their first encounter was – and will always be remembered as – a great fight. And the fact that it was Ali and Frazier in Manila instead of Smith and Jones does matter, just as it matters that it was Joe Louis and Max Schmeling at Yankee Stadium on June 22, 1938.

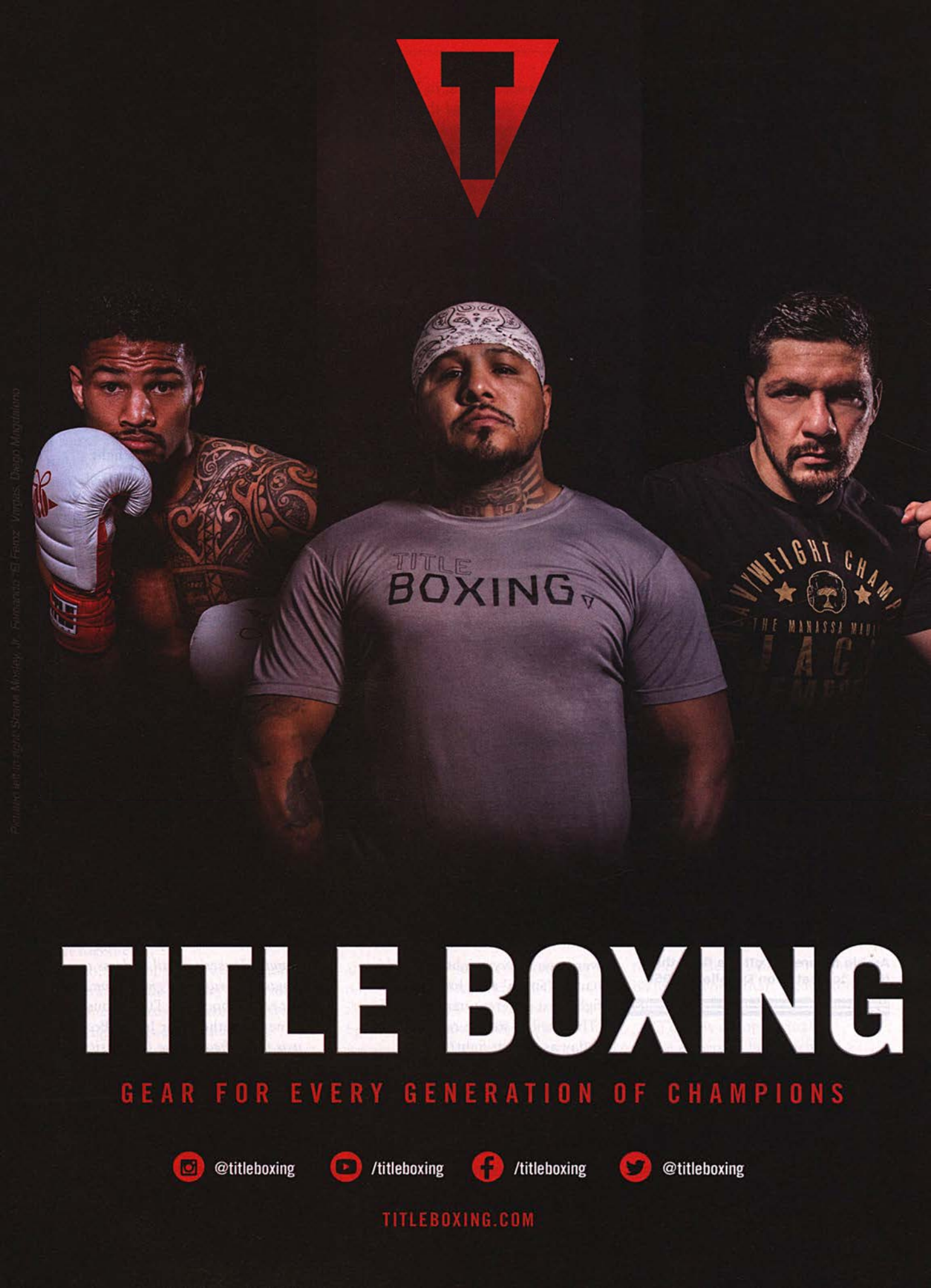
Ali-Frazier III showcased many of the qualities that make boxing and boxers great. To say that it wasn't a great fight because neither man was as good as he'd once been is like saying there has never been a great college football game because an ordinary NFL squad would have beaten either college team.

Silver's critique begs the question: If "The Thrilla in Manila" is overrated, what does he think qualifies as a "truly great prizefight?" The first fight he lists in that regard is Rocky Marciano's 1952 knockout of Jersey Joe Walcott to claim the heavyweight throne – a fight that Silver calls "perhaps the best heavyweight championship bout of all time." The second is Archie Moore heroically fighting back from the brink of defeat to knock out Yvon Durelle in 1958.

I agree that both of these fights were great fights. But let's not forget that Walcott was a faded 38 years old when he fought Marciano. And Durelle (a Canadian fisherman) had 19 losses on his ring ledger when he fought the 42-year-old Moore.

On February 14, 1951, 30 million people – one-fifth the population of the United States at the time – watched the sixth and final fight between Sugar Ray Robinson and Jake LaMotta on television. That would be equivalent to 65 million viewers today. One thing Mike Silver and I can agree on is that it's sad those times are long gone.

Thomas Hauser's email address is thomashauserwriter@gmail.com. His most recent book – A Dangerous Journey: Another Year Inside Boxing *– was published by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism. He will be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame with the Class of 2020.*



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RATINGS

The Ring Ratings through fights of July 18, 2020

The unbeaten Terence Crawford, No. 4 in the pound-for-pound rankings, has won 14 world title bouts in three divisions and held Ring championships in two.

1 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

2 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)

3 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)

4 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)

5 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 17-0-0 (13 KOs)

6 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)

7 **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)

8 **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)

9 **ARTUR BETERBIEV**
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

10 **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

C **TYSON FURY** RING, WBC
U.K. • 30-0-1 (21 KOs)

1 **ANTHONY JOSHUA** IBF, WBA, WBO
U.K. • 23-1-0 (21 KOs)

2 **DILLIAN WHYTE**
U.K. • 27-1-0 (18 KOs)

3 **DEONTAY WILDER**
U.S. • 42-1-1 (41 KOs)

4 **LUIS ORTIZ**
Cuba • 31-2-0 (26 KOs)

5 **ANDY RUIZ JR.**
U.S. • 33-2-0 (22 KOs)

6 **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)

7 **JOSEPH PARKER**
New Zealand • 27-2-0 (21 KOs)

8 **MICHAEL HUNTER**
U.S. • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)

9 **OSCAR RIVAS**
Colombia • 26-1-0 (18 KOs)

10 **KUBRAT PULEV**
Bulgaria • 28-1-0 (14 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **MAIRIS BRIEDIS**
Latvia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)

2 **YUNIEL DORTICOS** IBF
Cuba • 24-1-0 (22 KOs)

3 **ILUNGA MAKABU** WBC
Congo • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)

4 **KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI**
Poland • 31-2-0 (19 KOs)

5 **KEVIN LERENA**
S. Africa • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)

6 **ANDREW TABITI**
U.S. • 17-1-0 (13 KOs)

7 **LAWRENCE OKOLIE**
U.K. • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

8 **ARSEN GOULAMIRIAN** WBA
France • 26-0-0 (18 KOs)

9 **THABISO MCHUNU**
S. Africa • 22-5-0 (13 KOs)

10 **MICHAL CIESLAK**
Poland • 19-1-0 (13 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 POUNDS

C **(VACANT)**

1 **ARTUR BETERBIEV** IBF, WBC
Russia • 15-0-0 (15 KOs)

2 **DMITRY BIVOL** WBA
Russia • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

3 **SERGEY KOVALEV**
Russia • 34-4-1 (29 KOs)

4 **ELEIDER ALVAREZ**
Colombia • 25-1-0 (13 KOs)

5 **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada • 35-6-1 (20 KOs)

6 **BADOU JACK**
Sweden • 22-3-3 (13 KOs)

7 **MARCUS BROWNE**
U.S. • 23-1-0 (16 KOs)

8 **JOE SMITH JR.**
U.S. • 25-3-0 (20 KOs)

9 **DOMINIC BOESEL**
Germany • 30-1-0 (12 KOs)

10 **ANTHONY YARDE**
U.K. • 19-1-0 (18 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 POUNDS

C **CALLUM SMITH** RING, WBA
U.K. • 27-0-0 (19 KOs)

1 **DAVID BENAVIDEZ** WBC
U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)

2 **CALEB PLANT** IBF
U.S. • 20-0-0 (12 KOs)

3 **ANTHONY DIRRELL**
U.S. • 33-2-1 (24 KOs)

4 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)

5 **BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** WBO
U.K. • 29-0-0 (14 KOs)

6 **CALEB TRUAX**
U.S. • 31-4-2 (19 KOs)

7 **JOHN RYDER**
U.K. • 28-5-0 (16 KOs)

8 **FEDOR CHUDINOV**
Russia • 22-2-0 (15 KOs)

9 **DAVID LEMIEUX**
Canada • 41-4-0 (34 KOs)

10 **DANIEL JACOBS**
U.S. • 36-3-0 (30 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of July 18, 2020

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 POUNDS

- **C** **CANELO ALVAREZ** RING, WBA
  Mexico • 53-1-2 (36 KOs)
- **1** **GENNADIY GOLOVKIN** IBF
  Kaz. • 40-1-1 (35 KOs)
- **2** **DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** WBO
  U.S. • 29-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **JERMALL CHARLO** WBC
  U.S. • 30-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4** **SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO**
  Ukraine • 13-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **5** **RYOTA MURATA**
  Japan • 16-2-0 (13 KOs)
- **6** **KAMIL SZEREMETA**
  Poland • 21-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **7** **CHRIS EUBANK JR.**
  U.K. • 29-2-0 (22 KOs)
- **8** **MACIEJ SULECKI**
  Poland • 28-2-0 (11 KOs)
- **9** **ROB BRANT**
  U.S. • 25-2-0 (17 KOs)
- **10** **LIAM WILLIAMS**
  U.K. • 22-2-1 (17 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JERMELL CHARLO** WBC
  U.S. • 33-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **JEISON ROSARIO** IBF, WBA
  Dom. Rep. • 20-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **3** **JULIAN WILLIAMS**
  U.S. • 27-2-1 (16 KOs)
- **4** **JARRETT HURD**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **ERISLANDY LARA**
  Cuba • 26-3-3 (15 KOs)
- **6** **BRIAN CASTANO**
  Argentina • 16-0-1 (12 KOs)
- **7** **TONY HARRISON**
  U.S. • 28-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **8** **MICHEL SORO**
  France • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **9** **ERICKSON LUBIN**
  U.S. • 22-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **10** **PATRICK TEIXEIRA** WBO
  Brazil • 31-1-0 (22 KOs)

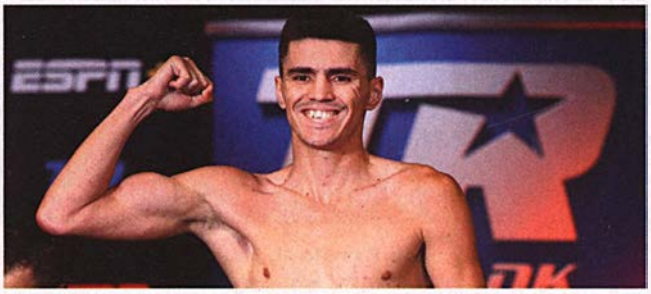
WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **ERROL SPENCE JR.** IBF, WBC
  U.S. • 26-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **2** **TERENCE CRAWFORD** WBO
  U.S. • 36-0-0 (27 KOs)
- **3** **MANNY PACQUIAO** WBA
  Phil. • 62-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **4** **KEITH THURMAN**
  U.S. • 29-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **5** **SHAWN PORTER**
  U.S. • 30-3-1 (17 KOs)
- **6** **DANNY GARCIA**
  U.S. • 36-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **YORDENIS UGAS**
  Cuba • 25-4-0 (12 KOs)
- **8** **KUDRATILLO ABDUKAKHOROV**
  Uzbekistan • 17-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **9** **SERGEY LIPINETS**
  Russia • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **MIKEY GARCIA**
  U.S. • 40-1-0 (30 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 POUNDS

- **C** **JOSH TAYLOR** RING, IBF, WBA
  U.K. • 16-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **1** **JOSE RAMIREZ** WBC, WBO
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **2** **REGIS PROGRAIS**
  U.S. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)
- **3** **IVAN BARANCHYK**
  Russia • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **4** **VIKTOR POSTOL**
  Ukraine • 31-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **KIRYL RELIKH**
  Belarus • 23-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ZEPEDA**
  U.S. • 32-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **7** **MARIO BARRIOS**
  U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **8** **ARNOLD BARBOZA**
  U.S. • 23-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **9** **BATYRZHAN JUKEMBAYEV**
  Kazakhstan • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **10** **SHOHJAHON ERGASHEV**
  Uzbekistan • 18-0-0 (16 KOs)

No. 3-rated middleweight Jermall Charlo will face No. 4-rated Sergiy Derevyanchenko on September 26 in Connecticut.



No. 10-rated junior middleweight Patrick Teixeira has yet to defend his WBO title after being promoted from interim status in December.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 POUNDS

- **C** **VASILIY LOMACHENKO** RING, WBA, WBO
  Ukraine • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **1** **TEOFIMO LOPEZ** IBF
  U.S. • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **2** **DEVIN HANEY** WBC
  U.S. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **RICHARD COMMEY**
  Ghana • 29-3-0 (26 KOs)
- **4** **LUKE CAMPBELL**
  U.K. • 20-3-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **RYAN GARCIA**
  U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **6** **ROBERT EASTER**
  U.S. • 22-1-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **JAVIER FORTUNA**
  Dom. Rep. • 35-2-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **JORGE LINARES**
  Venezuela • 47-5-0 (29 KOs)
- **9** **EMMANUEL TAGOE**
  Ghana • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **10** **RANCES BARTHELEMY**
  Cuba • 27-1-1 (14 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 POUNDS

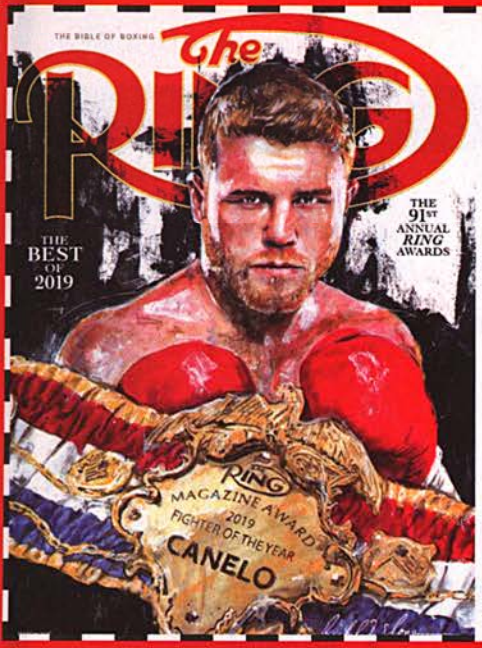
- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **MIGUEL BERCHELT** WBC
  Mexico • 38-1-0 (34 KOs)
- **2** **JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** IBF
  U.S. • 31-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **3** **JAMEL HERRING** WBO
  U.S. • 21-2-0 (10 KOs)
- **4** **TEVIN FARMER**
  U.S. • 30-5-1 (6 KOs)
- **5** **RENE ALVARADO**
  Nicaragua • 32-8-0 (21 KOs)
- **6** **MASAYUKI ITO**
  Japan • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **ANDREW CANCIO**
  U.S. • 21-5-2 (16 KOs)
- **8** **MIGUEL ROMAN**
  Mexico • 62-13-0 (47 KOs)
- **9** **SHAVKATDZHON RAKHIMOV**
  Russia • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **10** **CHRIS COLBERT**
  U.S. • 14-0-0 (5 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **JOSH WARRINGTON** IBF
  U.K. • 30-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **2** **GARY RUSSELL JR.** WBC
  U.S. • 31-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **3** **XU CAN** WBA
  China • 18-2-0 (3 KOs)
- **4** **KID GALAHAD**
  U.K. • 27-1-0 (16 KOs)
- **5** **MARK MAGSAYO**
  Phil. • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **6** **TUGSTSOGT NYAMBAYAR**
  Mongolia • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **7** **JESSIE MAGDALENO**
  U.S. • 28-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **8** **RUBEN VILLA**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **9** **MIGUEL MARRIAGA**
  Colombia • 29-3-0 (25 KOs)
- **10** **CHRISTOPHER DIAZ**
  Puerto Rico • 26-2-0 (16 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **REY VARGAS** WBC
  Mexico • 34-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **2** **MURODJON AKHMADALIEV** IBF, WBA
  Uzbekistan • 8-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **3** **DANIEL ROMAN**
  U.S. • 27-3-1 (10 KOs)
- **4** **RYOSUKE IWASA**
  Japan • 27-3-0 (17 KOs)
- **5** **BRANDON FIGUEROA**
  U.S. • 20-0-1 (15 KOs)
- **6** **TOMOKI KAMEDA**
  Japan • 36-3-0 (20 KOs)
- **7** **HIROAKI TESHIGAWARA**
  Japan • 21-2-2 (14 KOs)
- **8** **AZAT HOVHANNISYAN**
  Armenia • 18-3-0 (15 KOs)
- **9** **STEPHEN FULTON**
  U.S. • 18-0-0 (8 KOs)
- **10** **ANGELO LEO**
  U.S. • 19-0-0 (9 KOs)



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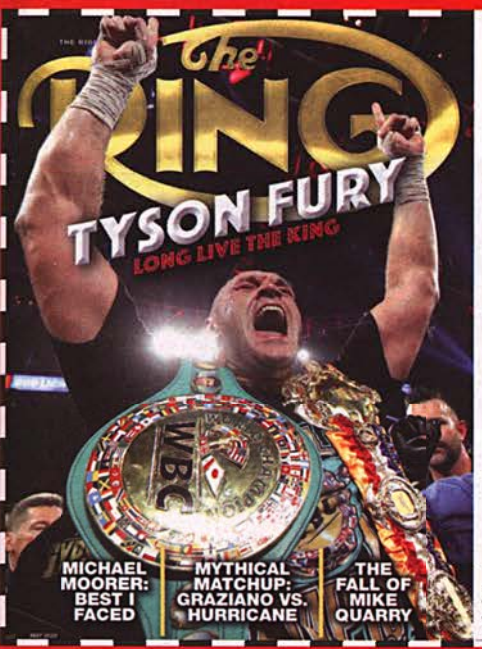

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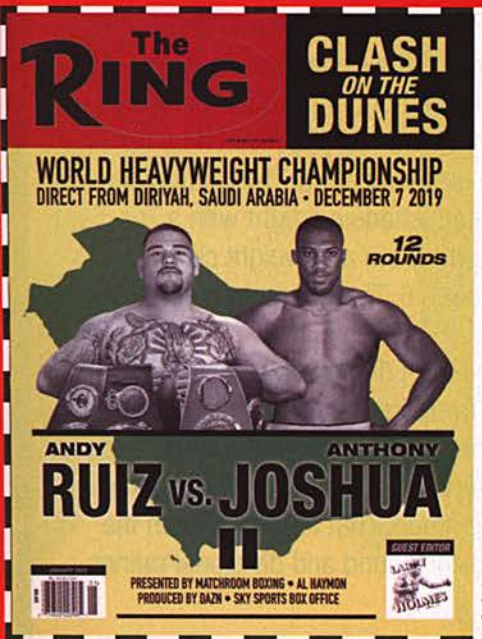

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RATINGS

Through fights of July 18, 2020

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 POUNDS

- **C** **NAOYA INOUE** RING, IBF, WBA
  Japan • 19-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **1** **NONITO DONAIRE**
  Phil. • 40-6-0 (26 KOs)
- **2** **NORDINE OUBAALI** WBC
  France • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3** **JOHN RIEL CASIMERO** WBO
  Philippines • 29-4–0 (20 KOs)
- **4** **EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 19-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5** **JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **6** **ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 28-4-0 (21 KOs)
- **7** **TAKUMA INOUE**
  Japan • 13-1-0 (3 KOs)
- **8** **GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX**
  Cuba • 20-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **9** **OSCAR NEGRETE**
  U.S. • 19-2-2 (7 KOs)
- **10** **MIKE PLANIA**
  Philippines • 24-1–0 (12 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 POUNDS

- **C** **JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA** RING, WBC
  Mexico • 40-3-0 (27 KOs)
- **1** **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 47-5-1 (41 KOs)
- **2** **ROMAN GONZALEZ** WBA
  Nicaragua • 49-2-0 (41 KOs)
- **3** **KAZUTO IOKA** WBO
  Japan • 25-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **4** **JERWIN ANCAJAS** IBF
  Phil. • 32-1-2 (22 KOs)
- **5** **KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **6** **JOSHUA FRANCO**
  U.S. • 17-1-2 (8 KOs)
- **7** **FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 33-4-1 (24 KOs)
- **8** **ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **9** **JEYVIER CINTRON**
  P.R. • 11-1-0 (5 KOs)
- **10** **CARLOS CUADRAS**
  Mexico • 39-3-1 (27 KOs)

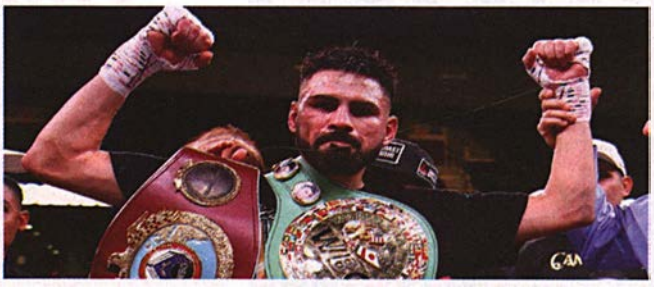
FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 15-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **2** **MORUTI MTHALANE** IBF
  S. Africa • 39-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **3** **JULIO CESAR MARTINEZ** WBC
  Mexico • 16-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **4** **ARTEM DALAKIAN** WBA
  Ukraine • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **5** **CHARLIE EDWARDS**
  U.K. • 15-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **6** **ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 13-1-0 (7 KOs)
- **7** **MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-8-3 (16 KOs)
- **8** **JUNTO NAKATANI**
  Japan • 20-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **9** **CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 29-5-0 (20 KOs)
- **10** **GIEMEL MAGRAMO**
  Phil. • 24-1-0 (20 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 POUNDS

- **C** **HIROTO KYOGUCHI** RING, WBA
  Japan • 14-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **1** **KENSHIRO TERAJI** WBC
  Japan • 17-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **2** **HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-4-0 (10 KOs)
- **3** **CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 22-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4** **FELIX ALVARADO** IBF
  Nicaragua • 35-2-0 (30 KOs)
- **5** **ELWIN SOTO** WBO
  Mexico • 17-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **6** **TETSUYA HISADA**
  Japan • 34-10-2 (20 KOs)
- **7** **EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 14-1-5 (5 KOs)
- **8** **SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 19-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL MATELLON**
  Cuba • 11-0-2 (6 KOs)
- **10** **AGUSTIN GAUTO**
  Argentina • 15-0-0 (10 KOs)

Scotland's Josh Taylor is the current Ring Magazine junior welterweight champion as well as the IBF/WBA titleholder.



California native Jose Ramirez is Taylor's WBC /WBO counterpart, putting the two on a collision course to crown the undisputed champion.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 POUNDS

- **C** **(VACANT)**
- **1** **WANHENG MENAYOTHIN** WBC
  Thailand • 54-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2** **KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART** WBA
  Thailand • 21-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3** **WILFREDO MENDEZ** WBO
  Puerto Rico • 16-1-0 (6 KOs)
- **4** **BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 27-4-3 (11 KOs)
- **5** **VIC SALUDAR**
  Phil. • 20-4-0 (11 KOs)
- **6** **JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 23-4-1 (14 KOs)
- **7** **SIMPIWE KONKCO**
  S. Africa • 19-6-0 (7 KOs)
- **8** **PEDRO TADURAN** IBF
  Phil. • 14-2-1 (11 KOs)
- **9** **DANIEL VALLADARES**
  Mexico • 22-1-1 (13 KOs)
- **10** **MELVIN JERUSALEM**
  Phil. • 15-2-0 (9 KOs)

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Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

The Ring Editorial Board considers input from the Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world and then decides collectively what changes will be made. That applies to both the pound-for-pound and divisional ratings.

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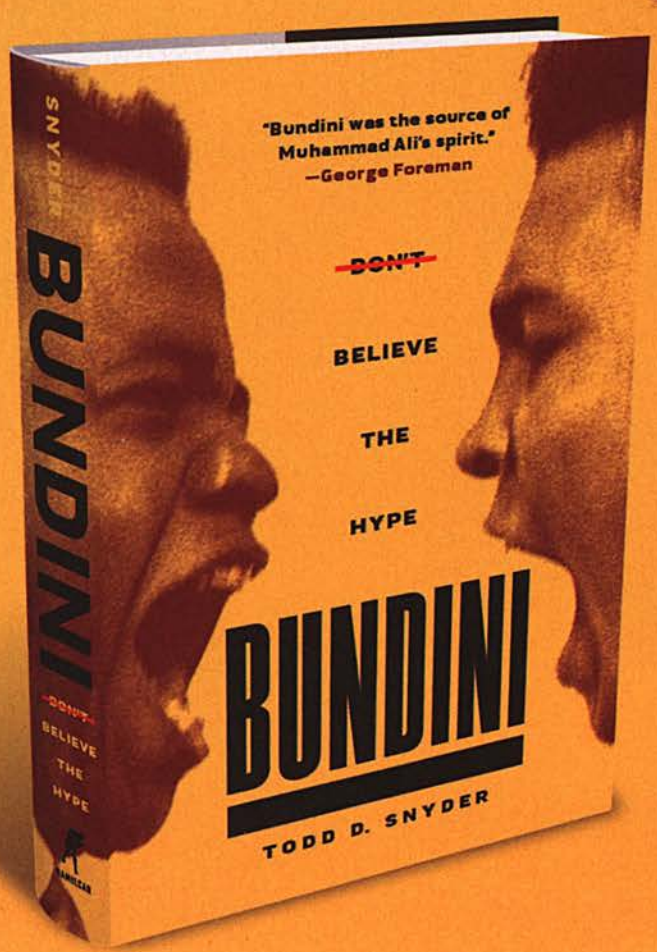

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LIFE IN A BUBBLE

IN AN EFFORT TO STAY IN BUSINESS WHILE PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF EVERYONE INVOLVED, BOXING HAS GONE TO EXTREME MEASURES

By **Dan Rafael**

It was mid-March and the spring/early summer boxing schedule ahead was jam-packed. On deck was featherweight titlist Shakur Stevenson's first defense against Miguel Marriaga on March 14 in New York with a slew of other notable bouts set for the weeks and months to follow.

Among them: Yuniel Dorticos' cruiserweight title defense against Mairis Briedis in the World Boxing Super Series final; a much-anticipated showdown between former junior welterweight titleholders Regis Prograis and Maurice Hooker; a bantamweight unification fight between Ring champ Naoya Inoue and John Riel Casimero; and superstar Canelo Alvarez's May 2 return.

Then the sports world began to shut down due to the intensifying coronavirus pandemic, and with New York the early hot spot in the United States, the Stevenson-Marriaga card was canceled on two days' notice. One by one, cards around the world – dozens of them – were postponed or canceled as COVID-19 spread unchecked.

The pandemic caused the Jose Ramirez-Viktor Postol junior welterweight title bout to be postponed twice; unified heavyweight titlist Anthony Joshua's defense against Kubrat Pulev on June 20 was delayed until the fall; and even the annual International Boxing Hall of Fame inductions set for June 14 were waylaid and moved to 2021.

The entire sport came to a halt, as did much of normal life around the world, and it would be months until boxing would gingerly return under strict protocols aimed at limiting virus exposure, which meant fights with no spectators.

By April, Top Rank, broadcast partner ESPN (which had no live sports to televise other than Korean professional baseball in the middle of the night), the Nevada State Athletic Commission and the MGM Grand in Las Vegas began working on a comprehensive plan that would see promoter Bob Arum's company putting on shows every Tuesday and Thursday in June and July inside a closed-off ring called "The Bubble" in the MGM's conference center, with weekly shows planned for August.

"We knew ESPN needed programming and we didn't want to sit on our ass and not do anything," said the 88-year-old Arum, who attends most shows. "I've been in this business more than 50 years and never seen anything like this."

Top Rank president Todd duBoef and COO Brad Jacobs began working closely on the plans with the commission and James Murren, the CEO of MGM Resorts International.

"We isolated all the problems we would face doing this and we worked together to meet those problems, because if we hadn't done that, it was clear that Nevada wouldn't allow us to run," Arum said. "The state has

Like all the fighters involved in Top Rank's weekly summer series in The Bubble, former WBO featherweight titleholder Oscar Valdez adhered to strict COVID-19 protocols for his 10-round bout vs. Jayson Velez on July 21.

PHOTO BY MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

been very strict. This was a major undertaking. We had to get it right, because obviously we didn't want to do anything that jeopardized the health of anyone. So the protocols had to be cleared by the state of Nevada, the commission and (ESPN parent company) Disney, because Disney had to put around 40 people into The Bubble to do the production."

It was a herculean undertaking that took two months to put into practice. Other than a club card on June 6 in Abilene, Kansas (see page 15), made available as a streaming pay-per-view, Top Rank was the first company back in action in the U.S., kicking off June 9 inside The Bubble with Stevenson stopping Felix Caraballo in the sixth round of a junior lightweight bout. Contenders such as Jose Zepeda, Jose Pedraza, Alex Saucedo and Carlos Takam also picked up Bubble wins.

But even with strict sanitizing and virus testing protocols in place, there were issues with positive tests, causing those people to immediately be quarantined and removed from The Bubble and for fights to be canceled.

Junior lightweight contender Mikaela Mayer, the 2016 U.S. Olympian, for example, was slated to fight Helen Joseph in the June 9 co-feature. But Mayer tested positive two days before the fight, which was postponed. Though she was asymptomatic and the test result was believed by most to have been a false positive, the rules in place were strict and she was removed. So too was Kay Koroma, a Mayer and Stevenson trainer, who tested negative but was removed because he had been in contact with Mayer.

While it was unfortunate Mayer had a fight postponed for the second time due to the coronavirus – she was on a March 17 card among the initial shows canceled – the silver lining was that the testing procedures put in place worked. And eventually the fight did take place, with Mayer winning a near-shutout decision over Joseph on July 14 in The Bubble.

"I've been in this business a lot longer than I'd like to admit, but this is by far – not even close – the hardest thing I've had to do," Jacobs said of his role as Top Rank's point person for the protocols. "That includes (Floyd) Mayweather-(Manny) Pacquiao, staging events at Cowboys Stadium, Yankees Stadium, you name it. Far and away this was the most difficult thing to do."

Jacobs runs the logistics of all Top Rank shows and in a non-coronavirus world he had a checklist of 250 items that he and his staff ran through for every card.

"That's everything from signing the contract with the venue and television production down to what time does the ring get in. It covers everything so we don't miss anything," Jacobs said.

Using that list as a starting point to begin planning shows in a coronavirus world, Jacobs went to work.

"I started to say, 'OK, we're now going to be in a closed environment, we're going to need testing, we're going to need sanitizing, disinfectant, PPE (personal protective equipment). Now let's take that list and apply a layer of protocol to it and see where it takes us," Jacobs said.

By the time he, the commission, ESPN and MGM officials were done, it had grown to a 370-item checklist for each event that covered everything down to minutiae such as making sure that when boxers weigh in they are wearing not only masks but thin booties on their feet and that the scale surface is covered with an antimicrobial sheet.

"Every day, I was adding things, changing and updating, but the bottom line is that it added another 120 items to that list," Jacobs said. "We have a great staff doing an incredible job, and to me it's like the preparation is what's paid off. We spent literally six weeks, close to 24/7, building out this playbook."

Cutmen "Stitch" Duran and Mike Bazzel have become fixtures at The Bubble.

Live boxing is operating with a skeleton crew, but ESPN announcer Bernardo Osuna is still taking care of business.

Top Rank produced a 20-page guide to the procedures and protocols for The Bubble, which Jacobs shared with The Ring. A map shows a large section of the conference center divided into 25 sections, including the main area with the ring, a dining hall, dressing rooms, training facilities and offices for Top Rank, the commission and ESPN.

There are regular temperature checks and biohazard containers in place for single-use hand wraps, towels and gloves that are regularly collected by a hazardous waste collection company. Water is provided only in sealed bottles and ice in sealed bags. Buckets, water bottles and jump ropes are new and sanitized for each fighter with their names on each item. Sharing equipment is prohibited. If a fighter uses a personal chef, meals are prepared off-site and delivered to a specified location using contactless delivery.

In the dining area, where meals are served throughout the day, there is somebody to disinfect the table and chairs after each person leaves. Between fights, the ring is disinfected. After each show, the entire ring area is sanitized by hand as well as with special ultraviolet lighting.

"Little things you wouldn't think of have to be addressed," Jacobs said, including something as mundane as ring announcer Mark Shunock working from a platform outside the ring. "We spent all this time running through every possible scenario we could think of. Then we had a positive test the first show and we followed the plan exactly, and it worked flawlessly. We were notified, Mikaela was locked down in her room and arrangements were made for her to have a rental car to drive home. Trying to get everybody's needs into one acceptable protocol was not an easy task, but we got there. The first objective we all had was the safety and health of everybody involved."

After putting on cards throughout June and July that included other positive tests, including two from junior lightweight titlist Jamel Herring that forced his defense against Jonathan Oquendo to be postponed twice, and one trainer getting caught and kicked out for sneaking out of The Bubble to go to the casino, Jacobs said "it's become routine, but it's certainly not without its issues."

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

He added: "There's probably no safer place than here, but you probably still want to practice social distancing."

Ideally, it starts with the fighters and their teams being tested at home before coming to Las Vegas.

"Initially, a number of fighters tested positive," Arum said. "So in order to hold that off, we told everybody, 'If you can, get a test at home so you don't have to come to Nevada and get turned down and waste your time and our time.'"

Once they arrive at the MGM, they are immediately tested – something Arum said is costing Top Rank more than $25,000 per show – and sent to their room to quarantine for several hours while awaiting the result. Everybody involved in the boxing events stays at the MGM Grand on a floor specifically for Bubble-dwellers. They are issued color-coded and dated wristbands with bar codes for identification purposes. There is a dedicated Bubble-only elevator, and even though walking to the conference center would only take a few minutes, nobody is allowed to do that. Instead, sanitized vehicles make regular rounds driving fight folks to and from the conference area to prevent mingling between hotel customers and Bubble occupants. No exceptions.

Fighters and their teams are also tested after the weigh-in, and staffers who stay in The Bubble week after week are also tested every Sunday and Wednesday. Many of the ESPN and Top Rank personnel entered The Bubble around June 1 and have not left, so, yes, Jacobs said they can get their laundry done at the conference center.

The Bubble maxes out at about 170 people when there is overlap between those leaving a Tuesday show and those arriving for a Thursday card. In order to have as few people as necessary inside The Bubble, ESPN's broadcast team calls the fights remotely with only reporter, Bernardo Osuna, on site and fighters are limited to two team members.

To cut down on people in The Bubble, Top Rank also hired two highly regarded cutmen, Jacob "Stitch" Duran and Mike Bazzel, to work every fight (a savings to the boxers), although a fighter can bring his own cutman if he wants and have him count toward his two-person allowance.

The fighters have had to get used to fighting without spectators, but most seem to have adjusted well.

"It's a different atmosphere," said heavyweight prospect Jared Anderson, who made the first of what will likely be at least three Bubble appearances on June 9. "There's no fans and testing, but it's not so bad. I'm not too stressed about anything. It's actually kind of relaxing just staying in your room."

Mikaela Mayer (left) put nine months of inactivity behind her by posting a unanimous decision win over Helen Joseph.

Boxing in the United Kingdom came back more slowly, beginning on July 10 with the first of a series of Frank Warren-promoted five-bout summer shows at the BT Sport studios in London. Warren was not in attendance because he is deemed non-essential by the British Boxing Board of Control.

"Everyone at Queensberry (Promotions) and BT have worked hard to get these shows up and running," Warren said. "As the rest of the country gets back to work, so does British boxing, and I'm delighted that it's Queensberry Promotions leading the charge."

Warren's show went off without incident as Brad Foster outpointed James Beech in a Commonwealth and British junior featherweight title bout in the headliner. On the undercard, lightweight prospect Mark Chamberlain won the first fight of Britain's boxing return by first-round knockout and he noticed the lack of spectators.

"It was a bit different," Chamberlain said. "I wouldn't say it's like sparring, because you probably got more people in the gym when you're sparring."

Matchroom Boxing promoter Eddie Hearn has a four-week "Fight Camp" series planned for August that will take place in the massive garden behind the company headquarters in Brentwood, England, culminating with the delayed Dillian Whyte-Alexander Povetkin heavyweight bout on August 22.

Golden Boy Promotions is scheduled to return with DAZN cards on July 24 (Vergil Ortiz-Samuel Vargas) and August 28 (Jorge Linares-Javier Fortuna) with Premier Boxing Champions planning August events.

Golden Boy's early shows will be at its go-to venue – Fantasy Springs Resort Casino in Indio, California – but there have been challenges similar to those that have impacted Top Rank when it comes to matchmaking.

"Our normal way of doing business has been hampered because a lot of people can't travel," Golden Boy president Eric Gomez said. "There are some fighters that are international that we use, and a lot of them don't have their visa right now because embassies are closed. The main challenge is the virus. We have a protocol we have to follow with the commission and it's expensive, but it's the price of doing business during a pandemic. What's important is the safety of everybody.

"What's stressful and tough, and we've followed what's been going on with Top Rank, is you can take all the precautions, follow all the protocols and somebody might test positive. That's what's scary and troublesome. You can prepare way in advance, but this virus is nasty and unpredictable."

Promoters are looking to get through their early cards before scheduling major fights that typically require gate money to work economically. It remains to be seen when and who the bigger names will fight in the fall or if they'll happen at all, because of the prospect of a second wave of COVID-19.

If bigger fall fights are arranged, Alvarez should be back in action and Joshua-Pulev will be rescheduled. Arum is working on plans for the Vasiliy Lomachenko-Teofimo Lopez lightweight title-unification bout for October 3 and working with PBC to schedule the third Tyson Fury-Deontay Wilder heavyweight championship fight for December 19.

Like everything, however, there are no guarantees, because the coronavirus may wreak havoc for the foreseeable future.

"Everything I say and everything I'm planning has to be done with a qualification," Arum said, "because a lot of these things that might prevent them from happening are beyond my control."

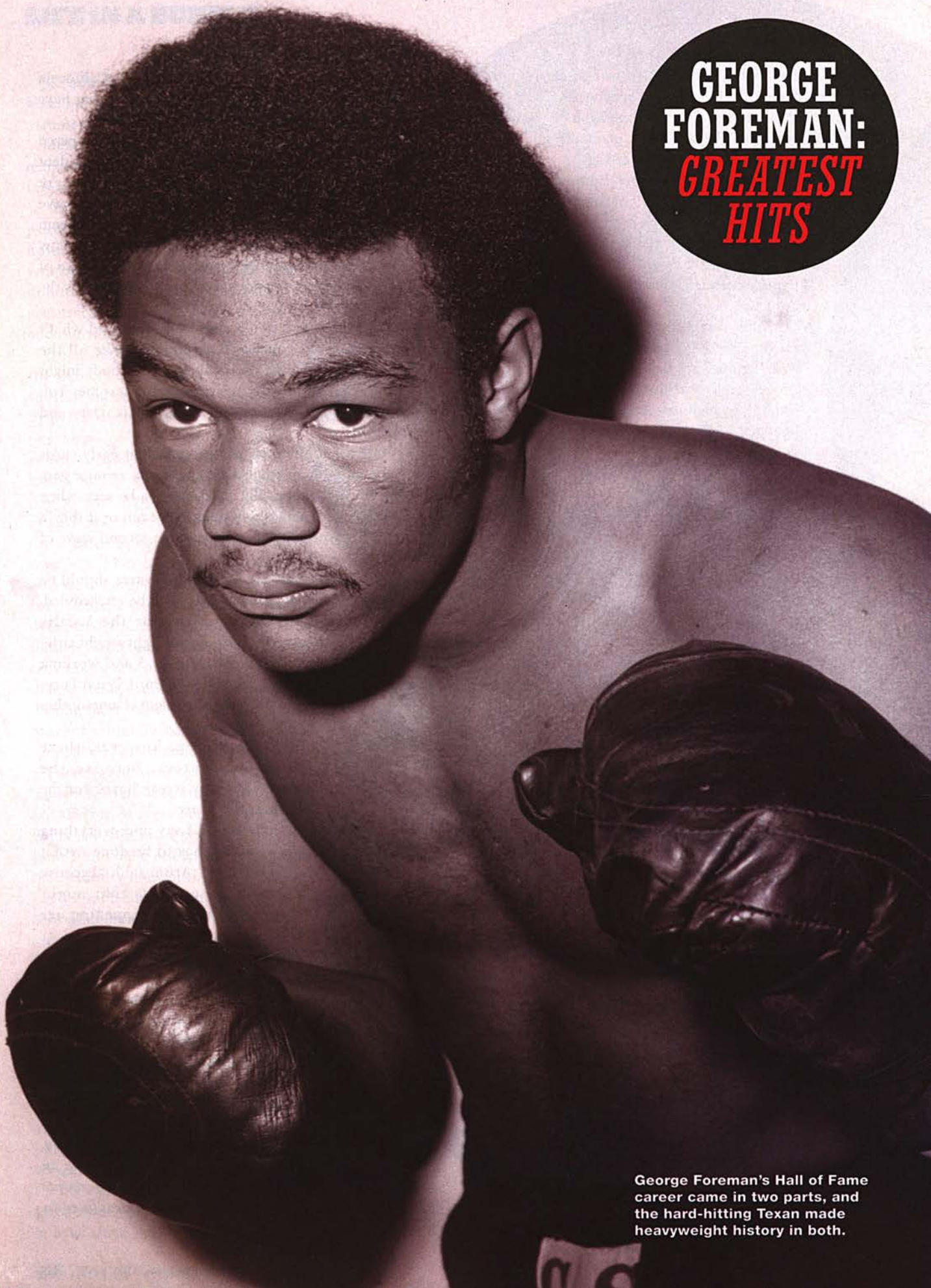
He might as well be speaking for everyone in boxing. RING

Hall of Fame promoter Bob Arum entered 2020 thinking he'd seen absolutely everything in a 54-year career. He was wrong.

[Editor's note: As this issue went to press, Showtime rolled out its fall/winter schedule, which included a Sept. 26 joint pay-per-view with PBC featuring Jermell Charlo vs. Jeison Rosario for the vacant Ring junior middleweight championship and three titles, plus a co-feature with Jermall Charlo vs. Sergiy Derevyanchenko. Also announced were an Oct. 24 Showtime/PBC pay-per-view featuring Gervonta Davis vs. Leo Santa Cruz and a Dec. 12 card headlined by Nordine Oubaali vs. Nonito Donaire.]

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

GEORGE FOREMAN: *GREATEST HITS*



George Foreman's Hall of Fame career came in two parts, and the hard-hitting Texan made heavyweight history in both.

AFTER ONE OF THE MOST UNLIKELY COMEBACKS IN BOXING HISTORY, 'BIG GEORGE' TURNED WHAT WAS ALREADY A HALL OF FAME CAREER INTO A POP-CULTURE PHENOMENON

By **Anson Wainwright**

There were two acts in Foreman's career: the mean, brooding, seek-and-destroy version of the 1970s and the lovable preacher grandfather in the 1990s.

Foreman, the fifth of seven children, was born in the small city of Marshall, Texas, on January 10, 1949. When he was six months old, his family moved 200 miles south to Houston to seek new opportunities.

"When you're a young boy, you don't look at life itself; you just want to play," Foreman told The Ring. "I got to be a teenager and started to hang out with the wrong guys. I made life tough on myself. I was basically a criminal."

He dropped out of school at 15 but attempted to get back on the straight-and-narrow working as a dishwasher. He had aspirations of working for Wald, a furniture-removal company, which would pay him $1.25 an hour. Clearly this was not his destiny.

In 1966, Foreman had his first amateur bout. Despite a modest level of experience, he would earn a spot on the 1968 U.S Olympic team in Mexico City and win the heavyweight gold medal.

"That was the start of my dreams. I never knew a dream could come true until the Olympics," he said proudly. "I stood on that platform listening to my national anthem with the gold medal around my neck. The best thing and most wonderful feeling I had in boxing, period. Never had anything like that happen to me before or after."

Foreman turned professional on the undercard of Joe Frazier-Jerry Quarry at Madison Square Garden in June 1969, stopping a 5-4-2 New Yorker named Don Waldhelm, who never fought again.

"That was the big time," he said. "I made $5,000. I'd never seen that kind of money in my life, and I still have some of it saved up today.

"That was terrific, all the crowds; everyone was waiting for Joe Frazier and Jerry Quarry. [Frazier] was the most magnificent fighter I'd ever seen. I didn't want any part of him."

Again, destiny would say otherwise. Over the first four years of his professional career, the young Foreman impressively went 37-0 (34 knockouts) en route to earning a shot at Frazier for the undisputed heavyweight championship in January 1973. Foreman dropped Frazier six times and stopped the defending champion in the second round.

As Foreman defended his titles with victories over fringe contender Jose Roman (KO 1) and The Ring-rated Ken Norton (TKO 2), talk turned to aging legend Muhammad Ali. Both men agreed to the fight, which took place in Kinshasa, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), in October 1974 after a one-month delay due to a cut Foreman suffered in sparring.

Foreman landed some frightful punches on his rival through eight rounds, but in a huge surprise, Ali used his now-famous "rope-a-dope" tactic to stun his visibly tired countryman and knock him out.

"No one expected Muhammad Ali to beat me – most of all me. I didn't expect it," said Foreman. "One time I hit him on the side of his neck, and he went, 'Uh.' You know, I've never gotten over that. I've never felt good about it. He said (during the fight), 'Show me something, George.' And then I'd try to hit him real hard, but I couldn't get him.

"He won the boxing match, but I've had nightmares about hitting him. I wasn't happy about that. I was able to hide because he got the victory, and I was happy because people didn't see what I had done to him."

More than a year later, the big Texan resurfaced and won a wild brawl against Ron Lyle (TKO 5) that saw both men on the canvas and was later named The Ring's Fight of the Year for 1976.

Foreman knocked out Frazier in a rematch and was looking for another title shot when he was upset by Jimmy Young (UD 12) in March 1977.

Completely drained after the fight, Foreman would later say he had a near-death experience in his dressing room and that it led to a spiritual awakening. He became a born-again Christian and an ordained minister, parking his boxing career to devote time to his family and congregation.

Following 10 years of inactivity, the 38-year-old Foreman decided to return to boxing in order to raise money for his youth center. He won 24 fights and eventually faced undisputed heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield in April 1991. Although he lost a unanimous decision, he gave a better account of himself than many expected.

After a loss to Tommy Morrison, Foreman was back on the sidelines for nearly 18 months, but he was offered an unlikely title shot when Michael Moorer upset Holyfield. He took it. Fighting three months shy of his 46th birthday and behind on all three scorecards, the still-heavy-handed Foreman was able to rally in the 10th round and score a knockout for the 1994 Upset of the Year.

He fought on for three more years and then bowed out after losing a controversial decision to Shannon Briggs.

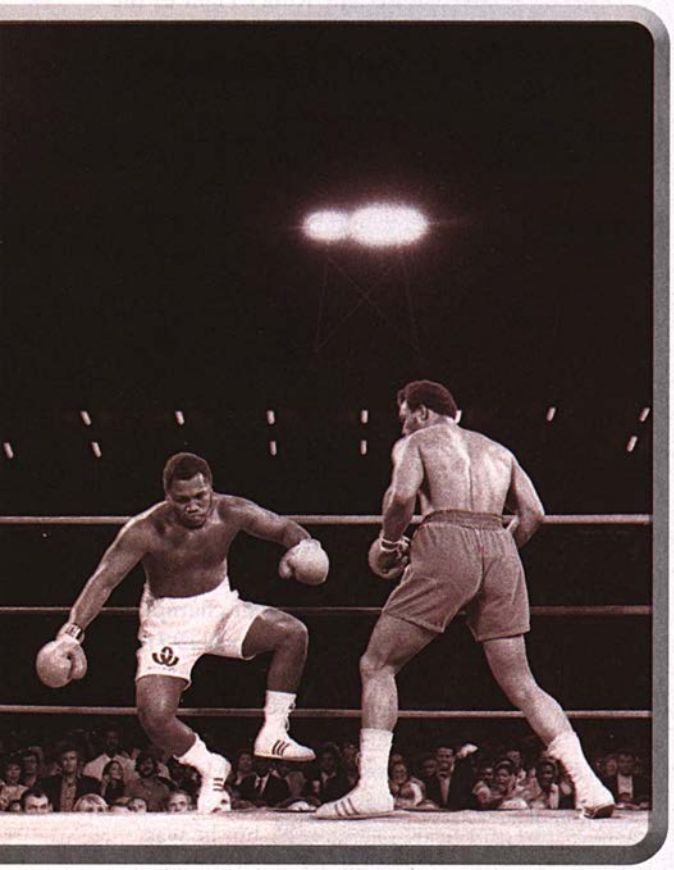
In retirement, Foreman worked as a commentator for HBO. Away from boxing, he famously promoted an indoor cooking grill bearing his name, a simple business maneuver that would amass him a fortune.

Foreman (76-5, 68 KOs) entered the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2003.

Now 71, the iconic former champion lives in Houston. He is married and has 10 children.

"Life has been so good to me," he said gleefully. "I don't think anyone could dream of a better life than I've had. Man, I've had a good life."

Foreman enjoyed looking back at eight career-defining fights for readers of The Ring »



JOE FRAZIER

January 22, 1973, National Stadium, Kingston, Jamaica • Titles: Ring/WBA/WBC

"The first Joe Frazier match was the first match I really didn't want to be in. They put me as the No. 1 contender, and I thought, 'How did that happen?' In the dressing room prior to every boxing match, Dick Sadler, my manager, would give me this story about each fighter – 'This guy can't punch, he's got a glass jaw, he can't crack an egg.' He looked at me that day and we both knew: Don't go there. This was the real thing. That was the most worrying moment I had in boxing, walking up those stairs. [It didn't last long] only because I was afraid. I think if I had kept that same fear, I'd be champion of the world today. Joe Frazier scared me, and what frightened me the most was I was ringside for Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier, and it could have been maybe the 14th round and he put his head on Muhammad Ali's chest and held it there and they went back and forth. We had that terminology – 'I'm going to keep my head on his chest' – but nobody ever done it. Joe Frazier did it. That scared me. There wasn't much celebration back in the old days; I didn't drink or party. For me to be off a few days from boxing, go to the movies … I didn't know how to celebrate. I'd been married to boxing for so many years."

RESULT: FOREMAN TKO 2

KEN NORTON

March 26, 1974, El Poliedro, Caracas, Venezuela • Titles: Ring/WBA/WBC

"With all the taxes being taken out of the purses in New York City, they took most of the money in state taxes from the fighters. So we started shopping around. Where can we get fights where no one takes the taxes? Venezuela [seemed like a good choice] – they wanted to put up so much money and they made a deal not to pay taxes. But then when it was time to leave, I got to the airport, they wouldn't let me out. I said, 'Why?' They said, 'You owe taxes.' Evidently the government lost out when the fight was over, so they changed everything.

"Everybody was afraid of Norton, because to this day I've never seen a match where Muhammad Ali beat Ken Norton. He just couldn't beat him. Muhammad Ali was not available, and the only fight they could get at the time was Ken Norton. I think he was the No. 2 contender. We took that fight. I looked across to his corner and saw all those muscles and thought, 'I don't need to be in there with this guy.' It was like he was carved out of a piece of granite. The good thing about Norton was he tried to get me. If ever a boxer tries to get me, it's easy pickings. It's those I have to go after that cause me trouble."

RESULT: FOREMAN TKO 2

RON LYLE

January 24, 1976, Caesars Palace, Las Vegas

"He hit me so hard it didn't even hurt. That was the hardest I've ever been hit. My manager told me to always wait for [the referee] to count and [Sadler] would tell me when to get up. So when I got knocked down (against Ali), I stuck my head up and bounced up but he told me to stay down. Then he told me to get up. When I got up, the fight was over! When you tell that story, people say, 'Yeah, George. There's always an excuse.' So there I am in Caesars Palace and Ron Lyle is knocking me down – and I mean hard. I remember thinking, 'What excuses are you coming up with now?' I couldn't think of one, so I got up."

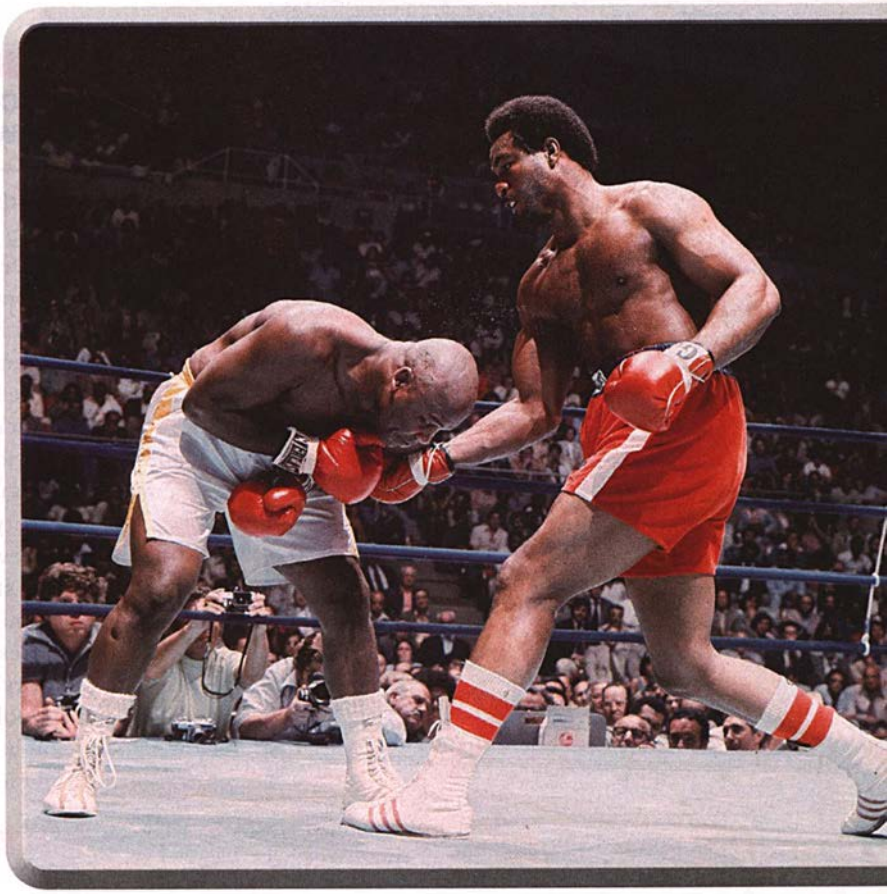
RESULT: FOREMAN KO 5

JOE FRAZIER 2

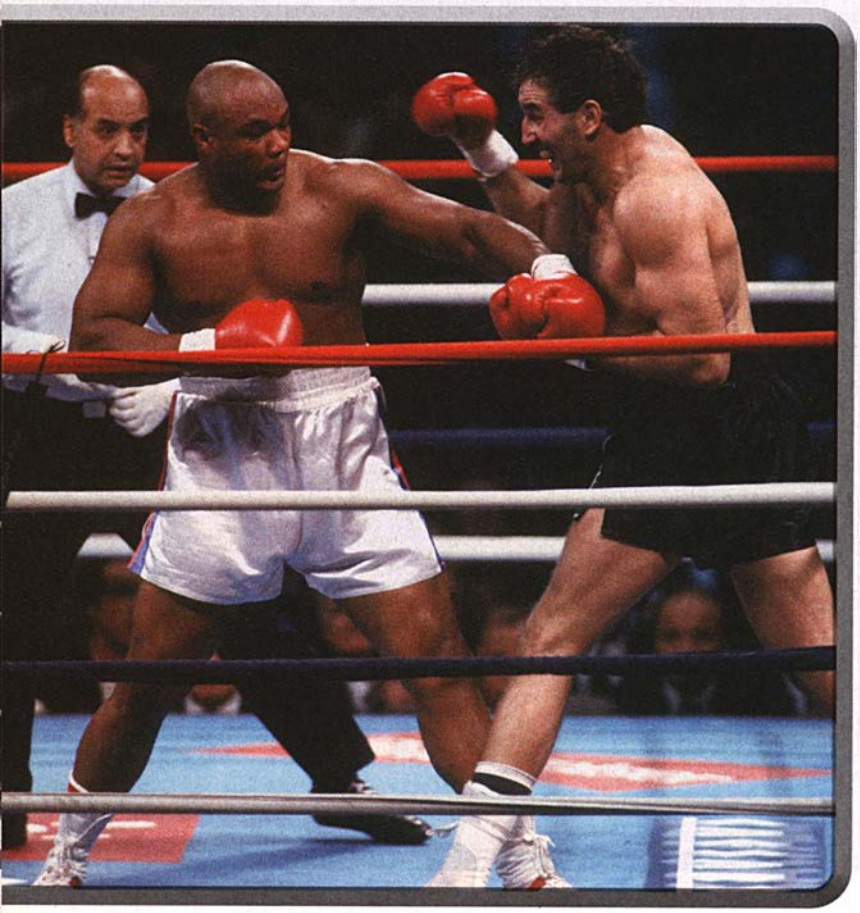
June 15, 1976, Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York

"Joe Frazier is a guy that is going to give his all every time, so it's not like you're going in the ring brave. I wasn't scared anymore, but I certainly wasn't brave. I had to box him; he tried to box me and I had to box him back. I was the No. 1 contender again. I was biding time until I got a title shot. I wanted to clean up everybody so Muhammad Ali would have to fight me. The good thing about [the Frazier fight] was it was in New York. I felt good. Joe Frazier wanted to box; he didn't come after me like he did the first time. He wanted to outbox me – the first couple of rounds spent boxing, and I was well-prepared. I still had a bit of shame on me from losing the title. He gave me a go and I gave him a go. He knew he couldn't stand up and punch with me. He knew all I wanted after that fight was to get Muhammad Ali back."

RESULT: FOREMAN TKO 5



FRAZIER: HERB SCHARFMAN/SPORTS IMAGERY

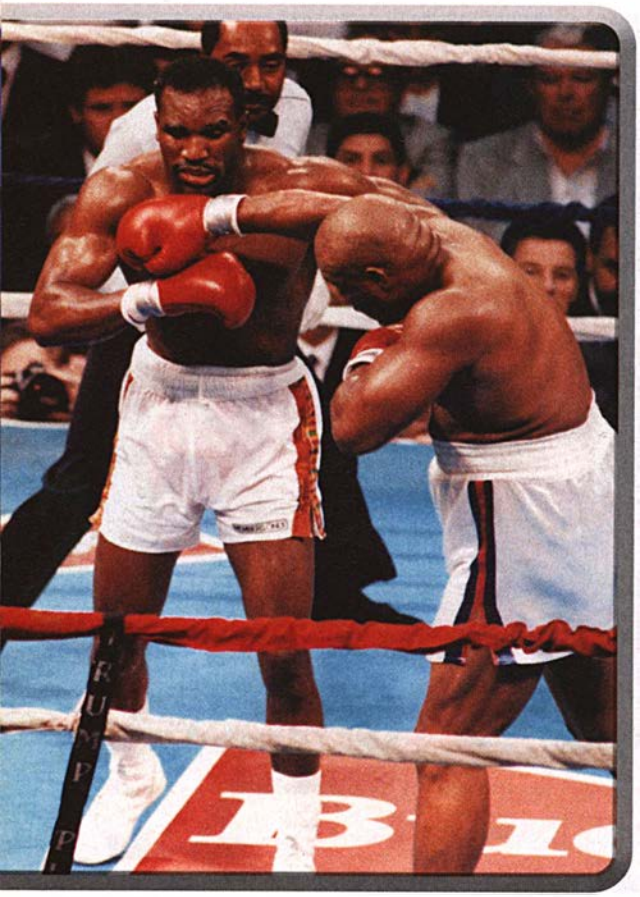


GERRY COONEY

January 15, 1990 • Convention Center, Atlantic City, New Jersey

"(Former light heavyweight champion and confidant) Archie (Moore) just said, 'When you go into training camp, work on your mechanics. Don't be sloppy. Get your punches up. Run your sets. He was like a drill sergeant, a real motivator. Cooney was a well-known puncher with a good name in boxing. That was going to be a test for the pay-per-view market, and the pay-per-view did well. I was over the rainbow again. Gerry Cooney hit me with a good left hook and rocked me a little bit; I got scared and thought, 'I can't go through this again. I'm going right out there and trying to finish this fight.' And he didn't run. He was right there for me, and I got a quick knockout. After that boxing match, everyone was talking (about) George Foreman again. I needed that match. I took that match against the puncher, and it was a match that set me back on the scene again. It was a good match. He hit me, hurt me, and I had to fight."

RESULT: FOREMAN TKO 2



EVANDER HOLYFIELD

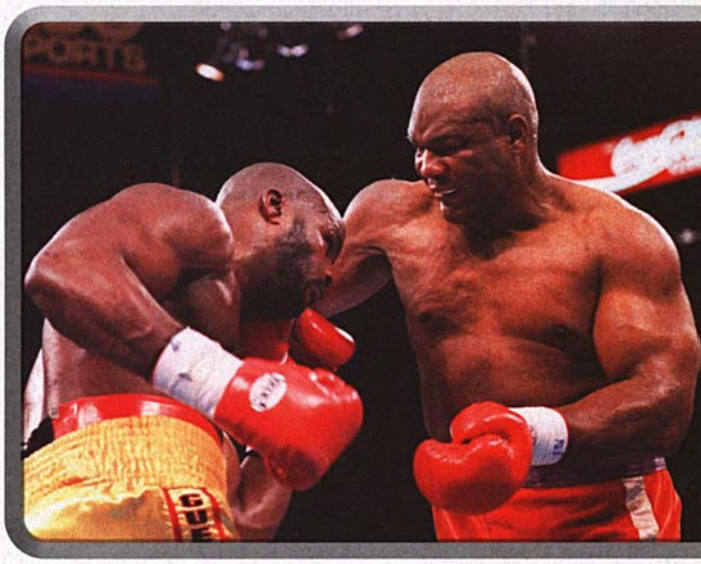
April 19, 1991 • Convention Center, Atlantic City • Titles: IBF/WBA/WBC

"Donald Trump did the promotion with Bob Arum and the Duva brothers. The buildup was what got me in trouble; I made sure I did every press conference, every telecom, every TV show. I did more promotion for that boxing match than I had ever done before. I wanted it to sell, and it did sell. When I got into the ring with Evander Holyfield, all I can remember is he was fast. I'd hit him with a hard shot, rock him a little bit, and he'd always hit me back. I'd never seen a guy with that much determination other than Muhammad Ali. He had more determination than I'd ever seen in my life. I think he could have hung with anybody in any era – the guy was that good – because of his speed and ability to regroup. At that time, it was the highest (grossing) pay-per-view. There was a story to be told; whenever you do something with a storyline, you can't beat it. It was the story of George Foreman coming back, getting back into contendership; he's old – all of that makes for a great story. I felt like I could have won the fight, but the storyline was that the odds were against me and I couldn't do it. I've looked at the fight on several occasions. Holyfield fought a good fight, but so did George Foreman. I felt great. The 12th round, when I could have got him, he started holding onto me."

RESULT: HOLYFIELD UD 12

MICHAEL MOORER

November 5, 1994 • MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas • Titles: IBF/WBA



"When I made my return in '87 to boxing, I was at a church and they were trying to gather money for me and my youth center, and I got embarrassed. I said right then, 'I'm not ever going to ask anyone for money again. I'm going back to boxing. I'm going to be heavyweight champion of the world. That's how I'll get money.' Integrity is what you've got to have. I stuck to it. I wasn't going to quit until I got the title. I was always a puncher; I was born with that punch. A guy put me in the ring and for the first two or three times would say, 'Wow, he sure can hit.' Even before I was taught to punch, I could punch.

"The fight was moving into the 10th round and I had my punch. I had trained for hours in my gym upstairs at home; I would hit the bag lightly with my right and come back with a powerful left hook. I'd do it over and over. That would make the guy decide to protect yourself from the left hook. That's what Michael Moorer did after I threw the left hook. He was protecting himself from the hook, and I just slide in a quick right hand. It was one of those things you do. It was strategy. If I told you I knew that was gonna happen, I'd be lying. (laughs) I was humbled myself, because after the boxing match, the only thing that was on my mind was I've got to get back to Sunday school service. I've got to get to church. I've got to get this swelling off my face. You've got to remember I was a preacher at this time. I got back on the plane and went back home to my family and got ready for church and attended the service."

RESULT: FOREMAN KO 10

SHANNON BRIGGS

November 22, 1997 • Taj Majal Hotel & Casino, Atlantic City, New Jersey

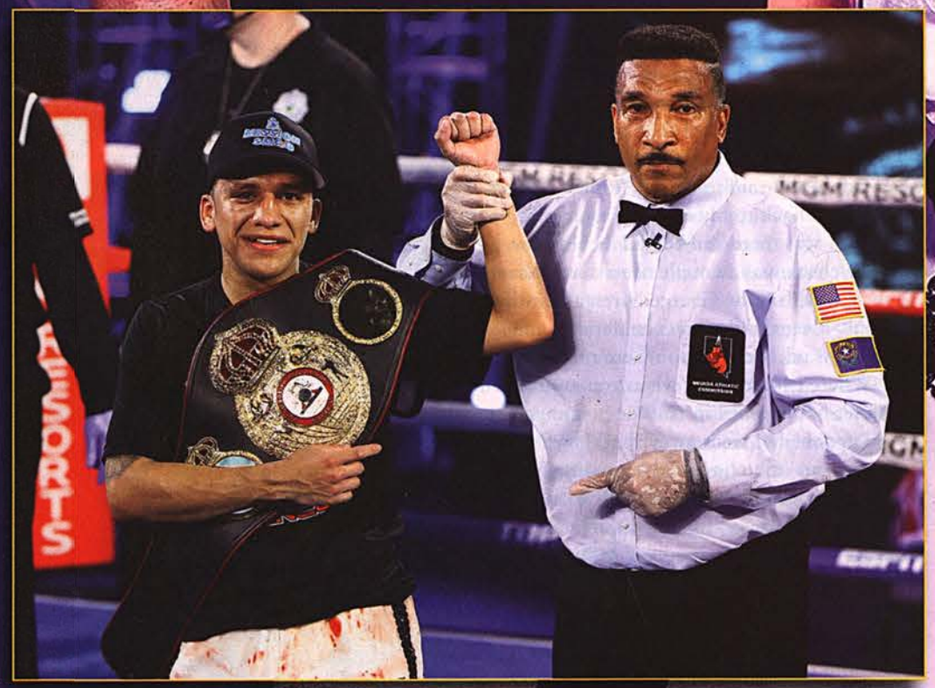
"For the first time, I was thinking, 'What are you doing boxing now?' You've got the title, you won the money. I just didn't know how to get out of boxing. After the fight, the decision was made, and I said to myself, 'I'm glad that's over.' I went back to my dressing room and my lawyer was there and he had a check for me – the check was a couple of million dollars for the royalty on the George Foreman Grilling Machine. I went to the press conference and everybody said, 'George, you were robbed.' I said, 'Where I come from, when you are robbed you don't have money in your pocket anymore. I wasn't robbed.' I went away thinking, 'Now let me get out of boxing.' I love boxing, I love working out, but it was time to move on."

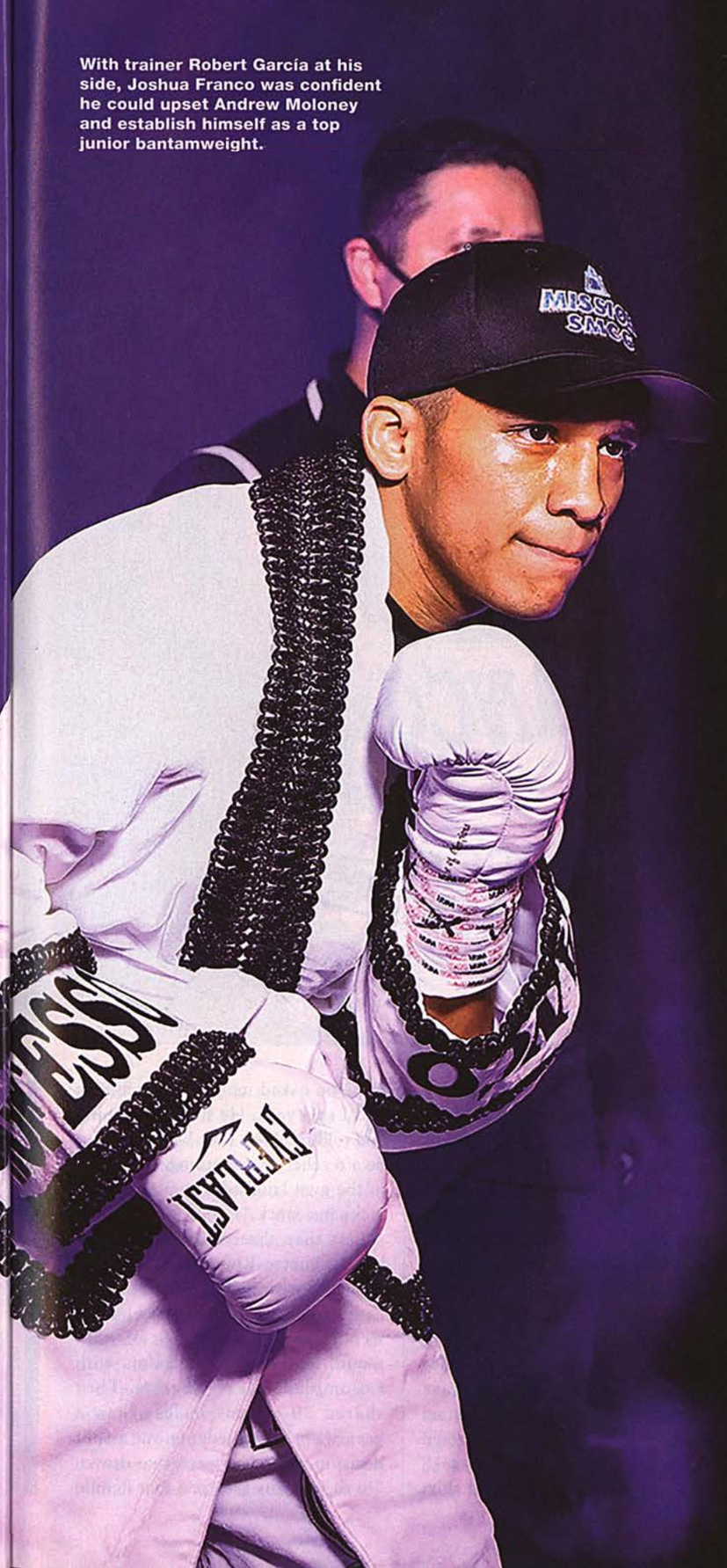
RESULT: BRIGGS MD 12

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

MOORER: HOLLY STEIN; BRIGGS: AL BELLO

THE GRADUATE





With trainer Robert García at his side, Joshua Franco was confident he could upset Andrew Moloney and establish himself as a top junior bantamweight.

PREPARED BY LESSONS FROM TOUGH MATCHMAKING AND GOLDEN BOY'S DEVELOPMENTAL CIRCUIT, **JOSHUA FRANCO** IS THE ONE DOING THE SCHOOLING NOW

By **Michael Montero**

On Tuesday, June 23, Joshua "El Profesor" Franco upset the previously undefeated Andrew Moloney to claim the Australian's WBA "regular" junior bantamweight title. The fight was competitive through the middle rounds, but Franco (17-1-2, 8 KOs) took control in the second half and dominated down the stretch. After dropping Moloney in the 11th round, Franco won via unanimous decision and left The Bubble at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas with his first major belt. [Editor's note: Roman Gonzalez holds the WBA's "super" belt, which The Ring recognizes as the true world title.]

It was a big win for Golden Boy Promotions, which has represented the San Antonio, Texas, native since he turned pro in the summer of 2015. "We're proud of Joshua Franco," Golden Boy president Eric Gomez told The Ring. "We have been with him every step of the way, and we look forward to some big fights at 115 pounds in the near future."

To use a baseball reference, Franco is the latest product of Golden Boy's farm system, having started out on their "L.A. Fight Club" series at the Belasco Theater in downtown Los Angeles. In fact, seven of his first 12 fights were at the club venue. He would go on to fight three times at the Fantasy Springs Resort Casino in nearby Indio, California, where Golden Boy routinely puts on shows featuring their developing talent. Franco also fought on the Canelo Alvarez-Liam Smith undercard at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, just a

PHOTO BY MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK

Moloney-Franco was a grueling contest, but the battle-tested Texan rallied during the final three rounds.

four-hour drive north from where he grew up. "That was a great experience," he said. "I have family right there in the Dallas area. To be able to fight in front of family members and friends on such a big card, it was special."

Other current titleholders and contenders in the Golden Boy stable have come up in the same manner – fighters such as Joseph Diaz Jr., Patrick Teixeira, Rene Alvarado and Seniesa Estrada. Franco says tough matchmaking and lessons learned along the way prepared him to succeed against Moloney. "They've been matching me tough with good opponents the whole time," he said. "They put me in with rugged veterans that taught me a lot. They made me learn the hard way, and now it's paid off."

Part of that hard road led to the lone setback in Franco's pro career in early 2018 in Puerto Rico against Argentine Lucas Fernandez. After dropping Fernandez early and controlling most of the action throughout, Franco began to tire. While ahead on two of the judge's scorecards, he was stopped in the ninth round. Although he was disappointed, Franco took it as a learning lesson to build on.

"I felt great early, but going into the ninth round my legs felt tired," Franco said. "I still feel that the fight was stopped too early, that the ref should've given me a chance to continue, but it taught me a lot. It helped me mature as a fighter and focus more."

It was a lesson for his trainer as well. "It was a learning experience for the whole team," said Robert Garcia, who has been in Franco's corner for the young fighter's entire professional career. "After the fight, Josh told us that he was very tired in those later rounds. It helped us develop a trust so that we could learn to talk about those sorts of things during a fight. We added Charles Tremblay (who works with unified junior welterweight titleholder Jose Ramirez) as a strength and conditioning coach. Adding him to the team greatly improved Josh's stamina."

It was during his first meeting with the Garcia team when former assistant coach Donald Leary gave Franco his "El Profesor" nickname. "When I first met Robert and walked into the gym, I had my glasses on," Franco said. "I had a collared shirt on. Don asked me if I was a fighter and I said yeah. He started laughing and told me, 'You look like you could be a teacher or something.' Everyone in the gym laughed. From there, the nickname stuck."

Less than three months after the loss in Puerto Rico, "The Teacher" returned with a confidence-builder fight back at the Belasco, then went straight into the first of what would be three terrific bouts with Colombian Oscar Negrete. They shared 30 rounds in less than a year, with Franco edging out a split decision win in-between two draws. "In those fights I learned that I could go 10 hard rounds with a veteran contender," said Franco. "It gave me a lot of experience and poise. I'm calmer in the ring now."

Franco and Negrete lit up the CompuBox statistics during their three-fight series, throwing more than 2,200 punches combined in the first bout alone. "The Negrete fights proved his conditioning," Garcia said. "Franco threw so many punches in those fights, and at a higher weight. It helped him be ready for the world title fight against Moloney."

The Negrete fights were held at the bantamweight division limit of 118 pounds. After that, it was back down to junior bantamweight, where Franco says he is much more comfortable. "I feel like nobody can hang with me for 12 rounds at 115 pounds," he said. "When I was facing Andrew Moloney, I just felt like he wasn't on my level. I feel like I'm too strong for the other fighters at this weight. I'm confident here and I'm going to be at this weight for a while."

When speaking with Franco, the beaming confidence is apparent. Franco says he would like to face the other titleholders in the division, with a focus on the most decorated of them all. "Juan Francisco Estrada (The Ring and WBC champ), Jerwin Ancajas (IBF beltholder), I want all those guys," he said. "A fight back home in San Antonio against one of them would be really good. But I want to fight Roman Gonzalez the most. I feel like a fight between us would be a war. He has all the experience, but I feel like I'm stronger. It wouldn't go the distance."

"The better the opponents are, the better Josh is going to look," Garcia said. "He's sparred guys like Carlos Cuadras, Abner Mares and Ronny Rios in the gym and looked great. A fight with 'Chocolatito' (Gonzalez) would be great. I think he's ready to unify right now."

Despite those lofty goals, all indications point to a rematch with Andrew Moloney next. There was a rematch clause in the contract, and it appears that Moloney will exercise it. On July 2, Moloney tweeted out, "I'm extremely excited to announce that I will be having a rematch with Joshua Franco. I want to say a huge thanks to Bob Arum and Top Rank (his promoter) for giving me this opportunity. I worked my whole life to get that World Title and I'm now hungrier than ever to get it back!"

Was Franco's win over Moloney a fluke inside "The Bubble," or does he have the Aussie's number? We will likely find out very soon.

Michael Montero can be found on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram via @MonteroOnBoxing. His weekly podcast, The Neutral Corner, can be heard on iTunes, Spotify, iHeartRadio and elsewhere.

GOING OUT IN STYLE

A TRIP TO CHEER ON RICKY HATTON IN LAS VEGAS LED TO THE CROWN JEWEL OF **JOE CALZAGHE'S** EXTRAORDINARY CAREER: **BERNARD HOPKINS**

By **Gareth A Davies**

It seems peculiar that Joe Calzaghe, whose entry into boxing folklore was assured 12 years ago as a result of defeating American boxing legend Bernard Hopkins to claim a championship in a second weight division, has little fondness for that contest on a raucous night of thrill and will in Sin City. Truth is, the "Italian Dragon" and pride of Wales was a perspicacious perfectionist. Victory that night defined a new step up and remains a satisfying flagpole late in his career curve, but the stop-start, clash-of-styles fight itself offers the reluctant star little pleasure now – apart from the fact his hand was raised, of course. It was a mighty name to notch in the "W" column. »

Trash talk from an American legend in front of the media in Las Vegas resulted in arguably the most significant victory on Joe Calzaghe's 46-0 ledger.

JOHN GICHIGI

There had been talk for some time from Calzaghe about a desire to prove himself against the decorated Philadelphian. Calzaghe, who was then 44-0 in his career, was already mightily accomplished when the fight with Hopkins was made by chance in the media room at the Las Vegas MGM Grand Resort in December 2007, when the pair confronted each other face-to-face and Hopkins crowed in front of a media mob gathered around them, "I would never let a white boy beat me!"

That tete-a-tete between our two fistic cavaliers was on the night before Ricky Hatton's challenge against Floyd Mayweather Jr., with Calzaghe having traveled to Vegas merely to witness Hatton's bid to scale the pound-for-pound list and put himself into the pantheon of great Britons in the ring.

Calzaghe, at home in lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic in Newbridge, South Wales, in a soft mood and lucid and open, recalled the buildup: "At the time, I'd won everything. I'd beaten Mikkel Kessler in Cardiff, and I remember speaking to (promoter) Frank Warren and telling him I wanted to go to the United States. I bought my own ticket to Ricky's fight with Floyd, and just went to the media room to catch up with yourself and a few others." But the chance meeting with Hopkins would provide the gilt edge to Calzaghe's stellar resume.

Indeed, Calzaghe received the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award in a ceremony beamed live from the cavernous and empty arena in Las Vegas the night after Hatton had lost to Mayweather. The award represents the biggest mainstream honor of the year for a sportsperson in the U.K., arguably outside gold medal success in an Olympic Games. It is special. Only Henry Cooper (twice), Barry McGuigan and Lennox Lewis have been awarded the gong from boxing.

Hopkins' pre-fight antics and mind games had no effect on Calzaghe, who seemed to enjoy the showmanship.

"I KNEW (HOPKINS) LIKED MIND GAMES." - JOE CALZAGHE

"That was a special weekend in Vegas," Calzaghe told me as we peeled back the years. "I had beaten Kessler at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff and got Sports Personality of the Year, Ricky got third in SPOTY and my dad got Trainer of the Year. If I hadn't gone to America, maybe the fight would never have happened. And maybe my career would've been completely different. Weird how things turn out.

"This is before social media, so to get the fight made in that moment was remarkable. I came back and told Frank Warren the fight was made. My whole reason was to go see Ricky's fight in Vegas, but Hopkins making a beeline for me changed my life. 'I'll never lose to a white boy' – he shouldn't have said that," laughed Calzaghe.

Indeed, a few months after defeating Hopkins, Calzaghe beat another American great in Roy Jones Jr. at Madison Square Garden in New York, then departed the sport undefeated in 46 contests and acclaimed, rightly, as one of the very best boxers ever produced in his country. For Calzaghe, there was nothing more to prove, and his journey in the ring was complete. It is even more remarkable now, looking back on an unblemished career that included 11 years as a titleholder.

Calzaghe explained that he "would never have been content without fighting those two great fighters in the mecca of fight nights in Las Vegas and at Madison Square Garden" but could no longer go on "with the fear of losing (his) undefeated record."

Even so, the fight with Hopkins remains a contest Calzaghe takes no pleasure in revisiting. "It's a fight I hate to watch. I'm pretty critical of it. It was filled with frustration. But looking back, I can see it was a good win. He was still a top fighter, but I was disappointed that I rushed it," Calzaghe recalled. "He fought the perfect game plan to make me look bad. He was awkward, he didn't come forward, and I remember going back in the corner for the first half of the fight and feeling that I was chasing him and getting tied up on the inside. But Round 6 or 7, I started to get to him as his work rate dropped.

"If I was looking for a punch that night, Hopkins was looking for a punch. It was that sort of fight. He's clever. I think after beating Kessler and unifying the (super middleweight) belts, I showed the world, but the one fight I wanted was for that (Ring Magazine light heavyweight title). Some of the fighters didn't want to fight, and I wanted to go to America. 'What's the point of staying in Britain?' I thought at the time. I'd won everything and beaten Kessler.

"We know now that Hopkins kept fighting way too long. But he was a master of psychology. When it came to being around each other in fight week, I knew he would be working on it a lot. He had mind games at the press conference. I knew he liked mind games. I'll always remember at the weigh-in he came up to me and I was calm. He said something like 'I'm from

Hopkins and Calzaghe, both International Boxing Hall of Fame inductees, share a mutual respect in retirement.

South block of D-block' – something like that. He was intimidating me because he'd been in prison. So I just looked at him and smiled at him and said, 'What the fuck does that mean to me?' When I said that, he saw I couldn't be intimidated. He pointed to my ribs and said he'd bust them out. He looked at me and walked away with his team and that was that. Little psychological things like that. I believe on fight night he didn't wear his little executioner hat. I took a lot from all those little psychological things. Maybe it was nothing and maybe he forgot about it, but he knew that week that he couldn't intimidate me. Fights start before the bell rings. The eyes don't lie. Say what you want to say, but the eyes don't lie. I can see it in your eyes; I can see what you believe you can do."

But the record is there: a split points decision and the crowd of thousands who had followed the "Italian Dragon" across The Pond to the mecca of the fight world, like they had for Frank Bruno, Lennox Lewis and Ricky Hatton before him, throwing their arms into the air and celebrating long and loud into the Nevada night.

"I've bumped into Hopkins since then," explained Calzaghe, who is now 48 and has the occasional workout on the bags hanging at home. "I think it was at an Amir Khan fight. We were sat together and we were speaking. He had the utmost respect and we had a good conversation. He asked for a rematch. As soon as I said 60/40 split, he had a little laugh and said we could negotiate. It was like being back in the old days. He said some nice things, complimentary. It's nice to know I have respect from him, and I've got massive respect for him and all he achieved afterwards. He also rang me a couple of times when he came to London. He was a proper fighter. I think I proved I was the same. I was always willing to fight. I always wanted to give the fans entertainment."

On other matters, as Calzaghe explained that he feels for boxers frozen out by the pandemic lockdowns around the world, we discussed a possible dream fight that might have taken place with Andre Ward. Some time ago, your correspondent asked Ward what he thought, and the great – also undefeated – American pondered long on the outcome. Ward believed they would need to fight twice to decide the winner of each other, but he clearly deeply respected the Welsh-Italian and his boxing accomplishments.

"I think it's quite similar to the Hopkins fight, but obviously I'd think I'd win," said Calzaghe. "It'd be a very hard fight, but I think I'd win it. Would our styles mix? Could it be a dirty fight? He's so technically good and tight with his movements, and he's a dirty fighter as well. He can be a bit bad, knock on the head. People look at both of us, we both boxed Kessler. He boxed Sakio Bika and it was one of his toughest fights. He cut him and (Bika) cut me. Andre Ward is a great fighter, and it'd be a tough fight. ... I have a lot of respect for Andre Ward. He's very polite, a true champion."

Ward was not unhappy with a split draw in the mythical matchup, by the way, when I spoke with him.

Then there's the Carl Froch fight, which also failed, timing-wise. Froch used his own podcast to call out Calzaghe recently here in the U.K., Froch now six years retired and 42 years of age. It was a joust. He had not really been serious. "He's a good fighter, but I think styles make fights and I think he's made for my style really," said Calzaghe. "He's strong, comes forward and he's quick. But I'm too elusive, too quick, and I punch hard, too. People say I slap, but ... I had bad hands, so I couldn't really use my full power in my last 10 years of fights. I basically had pain killers, cortisone for every single fight. Every single defense – every one. To be able to go in there and put them away with bad hands is incredible, I think."

Being awarded two belts from The Ring Magazine means so much to Calzaghe. "It's the fighter that makes the belt, I've always believed. I'm proud that (I faced) six WBC champions (Robin Reid, Richie Woodhall, Bika, Kessler, Hopkins and Jones) during my reign(s), and I beat them all. The Ring magazine is the ultimate, but to get a second one against Hopkins meant so much."

Calzaghe lost his father, Enzo, in 2018, a great driving force behind the fighter, and then lost his mother earlier this year. It hit him deeply, and there is a sense that Calzaghe has battled his own demons at times, especially when he talks of Tyson Fury, for whom he has both love and respect.

"I was a Tyson Fury fan before anyone else," offered Calzaghe. "I always liked his style, and he's different. He can change his style and adapt, and I like fighters who can do that, like me. He shocked me, to be honest. I did not expect him to come out as aggressive as he did in his last fight (the Deontay Wilder rematch). I thought he'd come out a little more aggressive, but I did not expect that. He dismantled him. Lot of respect for Tyson Fury. The way he's come back, he's an inspiration to everybody, really. A lot of people suffer in silence. Depression is a big deal and everyone can have it, even if we don't want to admit it. He's a role model. I hope it stays that way. Boxing was his savior, and boxing was my savior. I miss the boxing world. I want to get back in. Training or managing, I'm not sure."

Finally, to this peculiar time we are living in ... Calzaghe has comfort, space, his own land, and has never moved far from his roots. "I think it must be difficult for so many fighters during this coronavirus epidemic. I trained alone. A lot of my training was in isolation. You can run on your own. I've got a punch bag. It's not a gym. You can do it. You haven't got the sparring. But it must be tough, especially at the lower end, because at the lower end you need to fight to pay the bills. It's sad, and everyone is going to feel it across every sport. With boxing at the lower level, they need to make money. It's a matter of keeping your good habits and getting through this."

It was not long ago that Calzaghe was being readied by his father and making his walk to the ring, but he feels like an old-school fighter from another era, before social media gripped our every move, every call-out by a fighter or mocking meme that now typifies the sport. But Calzaghe can be called a legend. He held world championships in two weight classes, including the Ring, IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO titles at super middleweight and the Ring light heavyweight belt.

Having covered Calzaghe's entire career, I can say he was never one to boast of his fistic accomplishments. But from the southpaw stance, he was as obdurate as he was skilled, a consistent winner with an ironclad jaw. He had a willingness to take the fight to his opponents and was driven on by a fanatical father with whom the boxer shared an unshakable bond of love and ambition. He was unique. Irreplaceable, even. There will only ever be one Joe Calzaghe.

"IT'S NICE TO KNOW I HAVE RESPECT FROM (HOPKINS)." - JOE CALZAGHE

Gareth A Davies writes about boxing for The London Telegraph.

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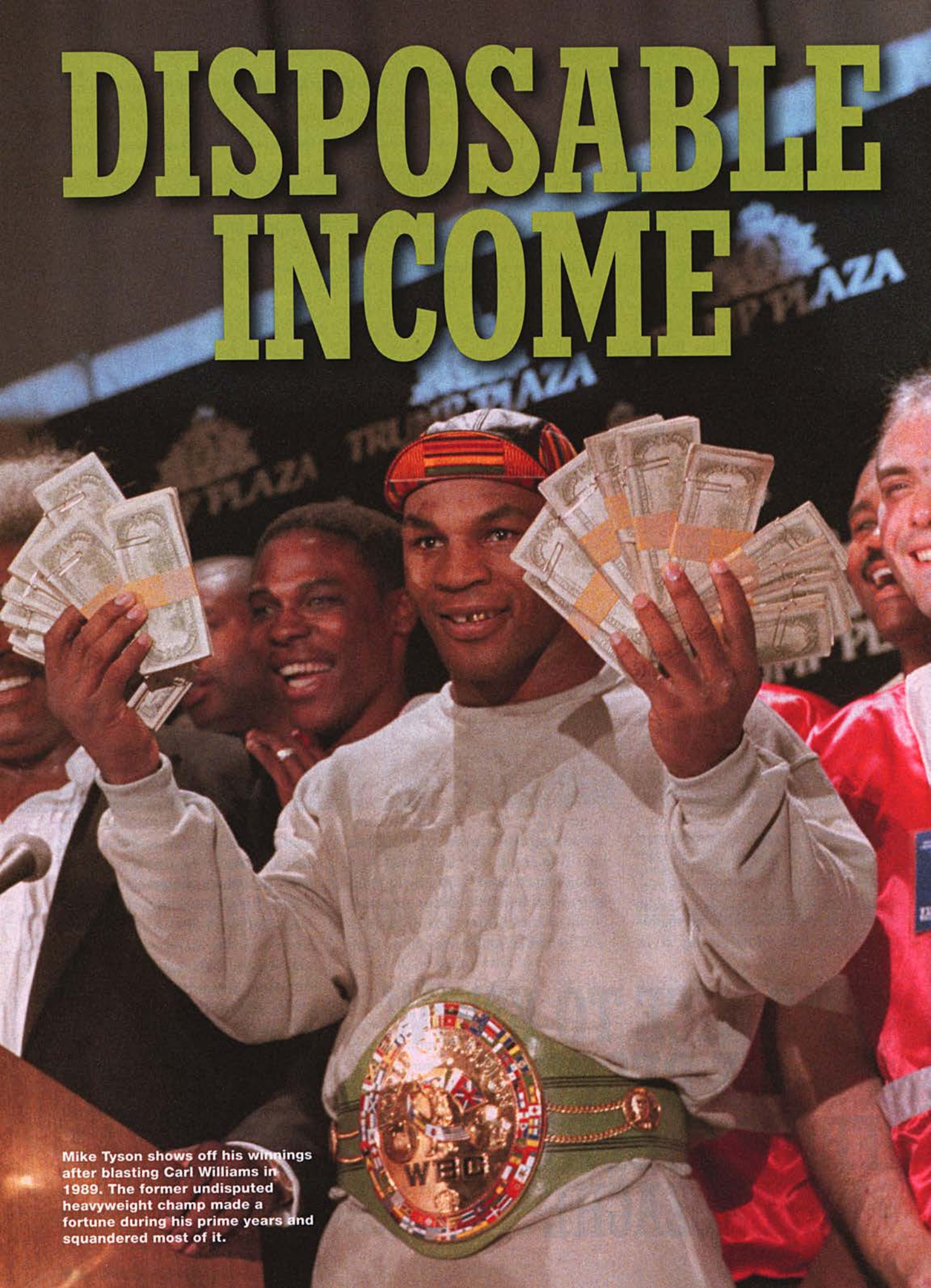


Mike Tyson shows off his winnings after blasting Carl Williams in 1989. The former undisputed heavyweight champ made a fortune during his prime years and squandered most of it.

SUCCESS IN PRIZEFIGHTING COMES ONLY THROUGH DISCIPLINE, BUT TOO MANY BOXERS END UP THROWING THEIR WINNINGS AWAY

By **Joseph Santoliquito**

The blood under Bobby Czyz's nostrils had not yet dried, it seemed, when he was awakened by a knock on his front door one Sunday morning in June 1981. Czyz, just 19 then, recognized the face. It was someone he went to high school with.

Word was out.

Czyz had won the New Jersey state middleweight title, beating Reggie Amid Muhammad the night before. He was bound to have some cash.

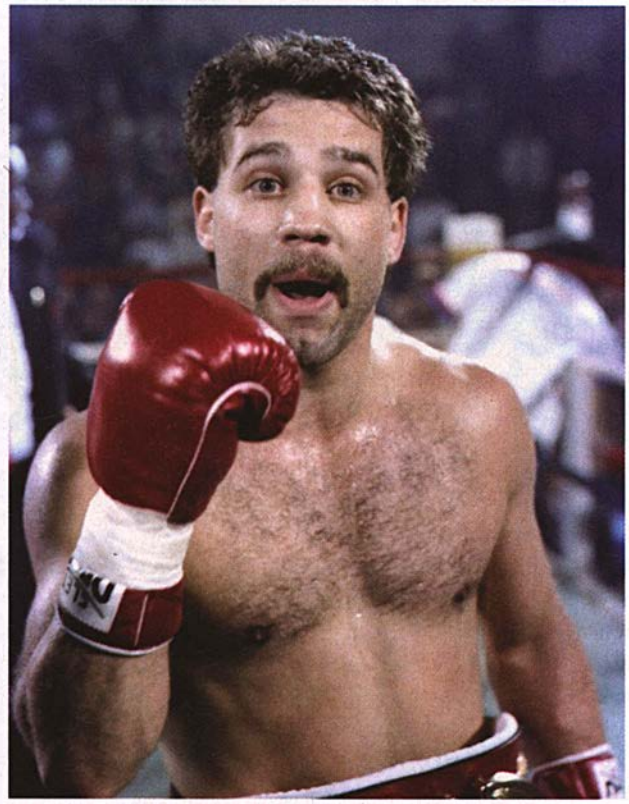
So the man at his door had no problem asking Czyz for a $20,000 loan.

"True story, unbelievable, and when I said no, he had the balls enough to ask me for $10,000," Czyz recalled, with a bellowing laugh that could tear down walls. "I looked at him like he had three fucking heads, and I didn't know which head to look at. We weren't even friends. The strange thing is, some fighters would reach into their pockets and give someone like that some cash."

It happens often with boxing. Fighters lose their money in the blink of an eye during and frequently after their careers. They have a small window of opportunity to earn the kind of income that is expected to last the rest of their lives – and many blow wads of cash.

Czyz had some mishaps that ate up his boxing savings – one being a serious car accident – lived beyond his means during his career and went through a costly divorce.

That's been the case today with many fighters: They lose their income to family and friends thinking the money will continue flowing in, not accepting that their careers will eventually come to an end. Sucked into this ersatz opulent world, they have made historically poor life choices, such as taking on huge entourages filled with sycophants or crazy purchases like sneakers that cost $5,000.



Czyz had a successful career, but he wasn't able to hold onto his ring earnings.

"The kids today coming up, with social media and everything, have to understand who likes you for you and who likes you for your money," Czyz warned. "They have to deal with people coming at them every which way. They need to find people that they can trust. And I hate to say it, it's people with certified financial pedigrees that have experience with money.

"Too many times, you see it over and over and over again, guys today entrusting people close to them. And what happens? They get screwed over royally."

Perhaps there is no sadder story in boxing than what happened to former junior flyweight champion Michael Carbajal, who entrusted his brother Danny with his finances. Michael earned more than $7 million in the ring, and he says Danny took it. Michael filed a lawsuit against Danny and Danny's daughters, Josephine and Celia Carbajal.

The daughters received probation. Danny was sentenced to 54 months in prison for fraud and forgery after working as the trainer, manager and financial adviser for Michael.

"My father actually told me a long time ago that I had to be careful of Danny, and I never paid attention to my father, because I never suspected Danny to rip me off," said Michael, a 2006 International Boxing Hall of Fame inductee after going 49-4 with 33 knockouts during his career. "My dad had suspicions I was being ripped off.

"I went and got the bank records myself on a Friday, and I remember it because it was during Hall of Fame weekend (in 2007). I took them home so me and my wife, Laura, could look at them. We laid out the paperwork on the living room floor and it said I was broke."

Michael was shocked – and angry.

"I saw $5,000 every month going to one of Danny's daughters," Michael recalled. "I tell all of the young fighters now to take care of their finances. Watch who is standing next to you, because look at what happened to me – it was my own brother who ripped me off.

"I expected to see millions in my accounts – and I had zero. I said to myself, 'There's no goddamn way that this happened!' When I confronted

Danny, he got all pissed off. He blamed Laura for me looking into my own accounts – and it was my money.

"I told Danny he was going to give me all of my money back. Danny told me, 'Fuck you, Michael, you aren't getting shit!' He asked me what I was going to do, call the cops? I told him not to worry about it. That was in the summer of 2007, and we never spoke since. To all of these kids coming up, learn on your own. Because it could be your own blood, your own family, who will break your heart and steal from you."

Michael owns a thriving gym in Phoenix, Arizona, called Michael Carbajal's 9th Street Gym.

"I've learned to erase all of the bad stuff, and all I want to do is wake up tomorrow," Michael said. "I fought for the joy of fighting, not for the money. Earning the money was my reward. I think that's what bothers me the most is that all of my blood, my sweat and my tears that went into my success resulted in the money that I made. And I don't have the money anymore, but I have my health and my character. No one can change that."

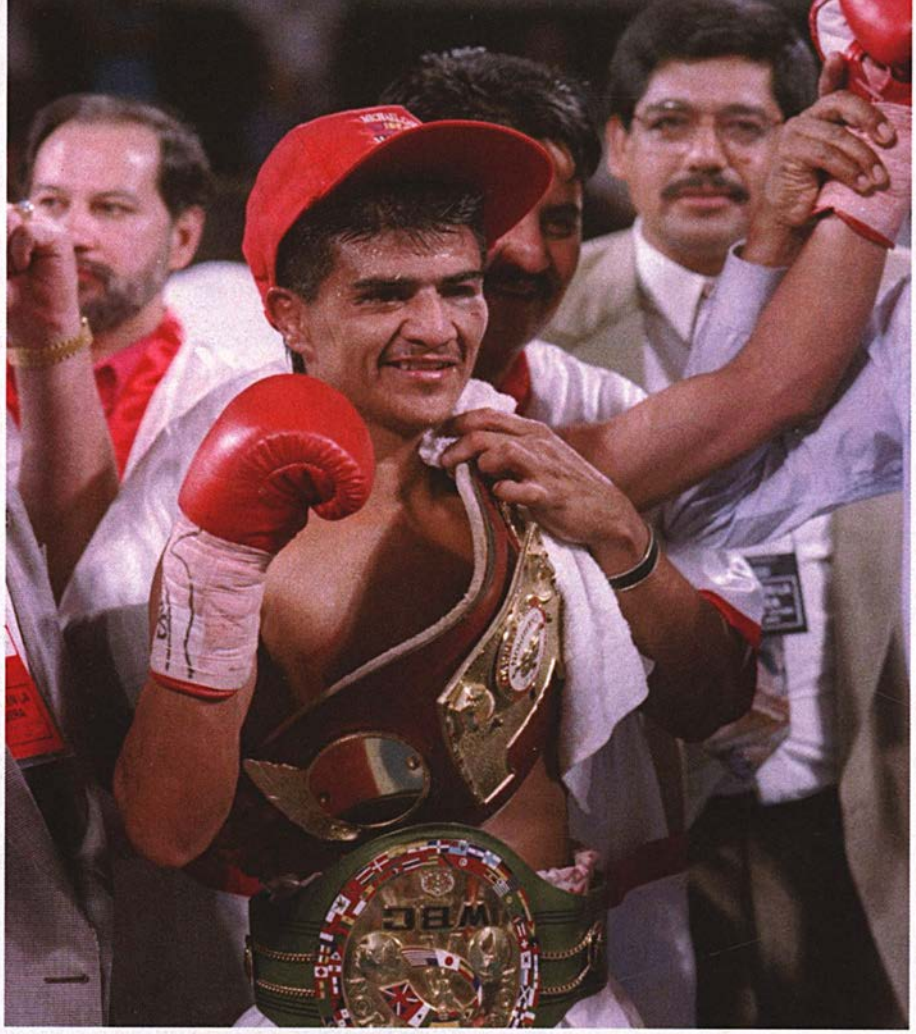
The greater sums of money a fighter makes, the greater the target it makes them. Carbajal dealt with a brother, but long-lost cousins have a tendency to come out of the woodwork when fighters reach a high level of success.

Complicating that is making serious money at such a young age.

Hall of Famer Matthew Saad Muhammad seemed to have it all. He had a beautiful home in the leafy Philadelphia suburbs and a fashion-model wife. He possessed a dramatic backstory of being abandoned when he was 5 and left on Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Parkway, where nuns found him and renamed him Matt Franklin after St. Matthew and the place where he was found.

Saad Muhammad went on to become the WBC light heavyweight titleholder from 1979 to 1981, defending the title eight times before succumbing to Dwight Braxton (later Dwight Muhammad Qawi).

By the early 1990s, Saad Muhammad was penniless, blowing an estimated $4 million in earnings through two nasty divorces and substance-abuse issues. By 2010, he was living in the R H D Ridge Center homeless shelter. He died on May 25, 2014, at the age of 59.



Michael Carbajal warns young fighters not to blindly trust family with their money.

"I remember going to his house around the time he was champion, in this palatial mansion, and Saad looked like he had everything going for him," Hall of Fame announcer Steve Farhood said. "I remember driving back home and thinking that Saad was someone who had it all. And we know how it ended, which was not good.

"Fighters fight. They can't be expected to navigate through life's issues as well as they navigate through boxing. It breaks your heart, because there's been a sad inevitability about these guys that hopefully the fighters today are learning from. You see some fighters today and you automatically wonder if they'll have any money in 10 years.

"You can see it while they're on top. These guys don't realize that they're going to live longer as ex-athletes than they are in their athletic prime. They assume the life they're leading is always going to be there.

"It's not."

In other sports, major stars can continue living off their names. Being Michael Jordan, Dan Marino or Wayne Gretzky still garners income. In boxing, there are only a precious few, like Mike Tyson, Oscar De La Hoya, Evander Holyfield or Julio Cesar Chavez.

Tyson is the ultimate example of how to blow millions. "Iron Mike" ran through an estimated $400 million, and much of it was on sheer waste. He broke every financial tenet, checking every box in the "how to go broke" rule book. He often lived beyond his means, even though he was making millions.

He once gave then-wife Robin

Givens a $2 million golden bathtub as a Christmas gift. He had a weakness for exotic cars. There was the Bentley Continental SC that cost around $500,000. Only 73 were made.

He owned Ferraris, Lamborghinis and multiple Hummers. He famously smashed a 1995 Rolls-Royce and left the car at an auto garage, telling the mechanics that they could keep it.

In total, Tyson spent a reported $4.5 million on roughly 111 cars. He had so many cars that he would lose track of them and dispatch his entourage, which at one time was 200-strong, to figure out where the estranged cars were.

He supposedly paid gravel-voiced Steve "Crocodile" Fitch $300,000 a year to yell "Guerrilla warfare!" at press conferences. It's said that he would throw away $240,000 a month as pocket money. Between 1995 and 1997, he spent $300,000 on lawn care and $230,000 on phones, pagers and related bills.

Tyson, however, is a rarity.

No, he's not worth $400 million. But he has reinvented himself. Between his movie cameos and his name carrying a continued brand cache, Tyson is worth around $4 million. He's not living destitute under a bridge, as some predicted.

In other sports, a middling pro can still make far more than the average median income. The looming problem with boxing is that there is no middle class.

There is a Grand Canyon gap between the haves and have-nots.

Contenders in the 1980s and 1990s like Harold Brazier, for example, could fight four times a year on ESPN and make around $15,000 a fight. A yearly income of $60,000 in 1995 is equivalent in purchasing power to about $103,000 in 2020.

Without that midrange income source, today's fighters face financial pressure.

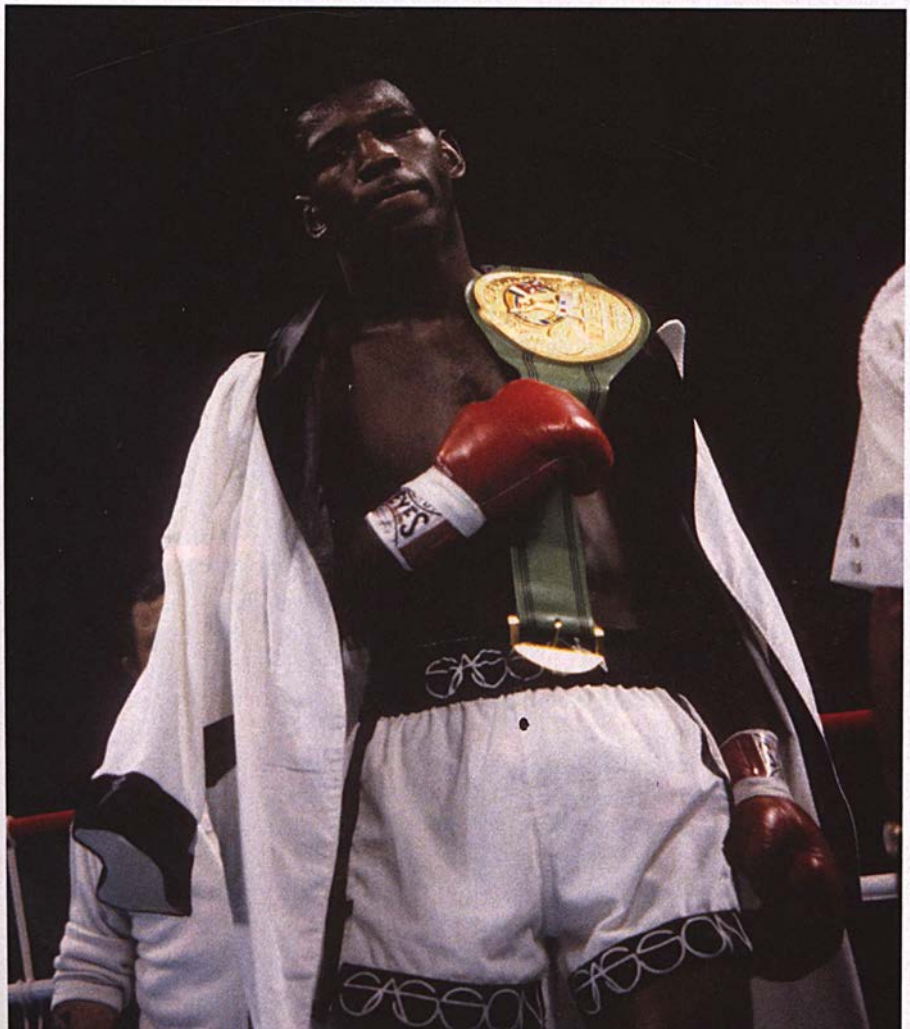
Sometimes fighters can't help themselves. Three-division titleholder Iran Barkley was offered financial advice and help during his career – which included significant paydays for the 1989 Fight of the Year vs. Roberto Duran, his 1992 rematch with Thomas Hearns and 1993 showdown with James Toney – and after he hung up the gloves, but the Bronx slugger was reluctant to listen and wound up penniless.

Shelly Finkel, however, did something to prevent one client from falling down a financial hole later in life. The veteran manager set up an annuity for 1984 Olympic gold medalist Mark Breland in which he put enough money away during Breland's career to make $100,000 a year for the rest of his life.

"When Mark turned pro, I took half of his signing bonus when he was 21, and when he turned 31, the annuity kicked in to make $100,000 every year for life," Finkel said. "In general, athletes and entertainers don't have the business background to handle the money they make.

"It's not like most people, who make a dollar one year and $1.50 the next year, and so on. With athletes and entertainers, they move from a dollar to $10 and don't know that it's going to end. They often don't have the right people around them so that they can take money out and live off of it later. Early on, Mark spent half of his annuity on cars and other things.

"I think today, at the top level, fighters are savvier financially than they were 15, 20 years ago. Fighters never believe that it's going to happen to them – and sadly, it still does today. But overall, today's fighters have a little more of a vision because of what fighters before them lost."



Matthew Saad Muhammad enjoyed brief prosperity through boxing before returning to the streets.

Joseph Santoliquito is an award-winning sportswriter and the president of the Boxing Writers Association of America. He can be followed on twitter @JSantoliquito.

LIFE OUTSIDE THE FAST LANE?

BOXING'S PANDEMIC PAUSE GAVE ERROL SPENCE JR. TIME TO REFLECT ON MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVING HIS FERRARI'S CRASH. FOR NOW, THE WELTERWEIGHT STAR'S FOCUS IS ON THE SPORT, NOT SPORTS CARS.

By **Bernard Fernandez**

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.
- To an Athlete Dying Young, by A. E. Housman

A. E. Housman, a British poet who was not an athlete and did not die young – he was 77 when he breathed his last on April 30, 1936 – almost exclusively wrote of the dooms and disappointments of youth, with *To an Athlete Dying Young* arguably his most celebrated work. It almost certainly is his most relevant poem in terms of today's hyper-paced world, as epitomized by a quote generally attributed to charismatic actor James Dean, who *did* die young, at 24, when his souped-up sports car crashed on a California highway on September 30, 1955. The forever-cool Dean's premature passing left millions of his fans wondering what he might have achieved had his career extended well past the three classic films in which he did appear.

"Live fast, die young and leave a good-looking corpse" is a 1950s mantra forever associated with Dean, whose obsession with very fast cars is commonplace to wealthy young men (also older rich guys) who can afford the pricey land rockets that are so fraught with danger as well as excitement whenever the driver gets behind the wheel and jams down hard on the accelerator. It was that way with the great Mexican featherweight champion Salvador Sanchez (44-1-1, 32 KOs), who was 23 and training for a rematch with Juan Laporte when he crashed his speeding Porsche 928 on August 12, 1982, dying instantly.

Perhaps it was plain old dumb luck, or maybe divine intervention, that saved IBF and WBC welterweight titleholder Errol Spence Jr. – who already has enjoyed an exemplary ring career, but one with so much more potential awaiting fulfillment – in the early-morning hours of October 10, 2019, when he made the unwise decision to drink and then see how much horsepower his pride-and-joy ride, a white Ferrari, could generate on a virtually open stretch near Interstate 30 in downtown Dallas.

That miscalculation could have cost Spence, then 29, his life or that of others when the northbound Ferrari went over the center median and flipped over multiple times. Photos taken of the totaled two-seater – capable of hitting speeds of up to 200 mph – showed the back end crushed and mangled, with part of the engine exposed. The right-front bumper also was peeled back. Police who arrived on the scene were unable to establish exactly how fast the Ferrari was going at the time the accident occurred, as there were no witnesses or other cars in the immediate vicinity, but the official determination was that it was traveling at a "high rate of speed." Incredibly, Spence, transported by ambulance to Methodist Dallas Medical Center where he was

The Ring's No. 1-rated welterweight received a serious wake-up call last October. Time will tell if Spence learned his lesson.

admitted to the Intensive Care Unit, came away with nothing more than facial lacerations and head-to-toe soreness. Although he was cited for misdemeanor driving under the influence, the outcome no doubt could have been far worse had Spence been wearing his seatbelt; as it was, he was ejected from the car, probably saving him from death or irretrievably catastrophic injuries.

At first, Spence, now 30, did not seem to fully comprehend the implications of what might have happened had the circumstances been somewhat different. Tweeting from his hospital room, the DeSoto, Texas, native, arguably the best 147-pound fighter on the planet (so rated by The Ring), cheerily tweeted that he had "No broken bones. I'm a savage!"

But that initial cavalier attitude turned more somber and reflective as the realization of how close he had come to becoming an updated version of Salvador Sanchez began to sink in. In Spence's first public interview since the accident, to Fox PBC Fight Night three days before Christmas, he described the fact he had survived the wreck with minimal damage as "a miracle ... It was a miracle from God. It really protected me, because anybody else probably would have been killed."

After a still-sore Spence was able to return to the gym and work out under the watchful eye of trainer Derrick James, he was granted an additional reprieve of sorts as the sports world ground to a halt because of the coronavirus pandemic. As other leading welterweights also were obliged to temporarily put their careers on hold, Spence, a 2012 U.S. Olympian at the London Games, did not have to go quite so far in his efforts to play catchup.

"From my perspective, it's been almost a plus, because some of the other guys would have been able to fight in-between," James said of the ongoing limbo boxing found itself in due to COVID-19. "We're still working to get some consistency, but having this additional time off – and with the other top 147-pounders shut down by the pandemic – I think it's leveled the playing field a little bit."

Spence and friend pose in front of one of his sports cars.

So, is the fact that Errol Spence Jr. is still here and punching due to Powerball lottery-winning good fortune, or is it something that might be attributed to a higher purpose?

"I think you could say it is a miracle," James opined. "If you want to call it luck, timing or whatever, fine, but any way you put it, it's miraculous. I mean, think about it: Any other day, any other time, he probably wouldn't even be here right now. He'd have passed away or been so badly hurt that he could never have fought again. If the accident had happened five seconds earlier or five seconds later, everything could have turned out completely different."

Spence (26-0, 21 KOs) doesn't disagree with his coach. "For me, there's really no way to explain it," he said when contacted for this story. "It's just a miracle for things to turn out like they did. For anybody to be ejected out of a Ferrari ... I mean, it could have been so much worse. I could have lost a leg, an arm. I could have been paralyzed or had brain damage. I could have been killed right then and there. But I didn't have to deal with any of that. I didn't even break a bone.

"I'm just blessed. What else can I say? I'm definitely going to heed the warning. You go through what I did, you definitely don't take things for granted as you once did. When you're young and an athlete at the top of what you do, you think you're invincible and nothing bad can happen to you. I definitely appreciate things now more than I used to. As

"I JUST HOPE HE REMEMBERS HE COULD HAVE BEEN ANOTHER SALVADOR SANCHEZ..." - DERRICK JAMES

far as boxing goes, maybe I was getting a little too comfortable. I'm more serious now about my life, my career. I'm not going to wait until I get a fight before I start getting into the kind of shape I need to be in. I'm going to train year-round ... stay ready so I won't have to get ready."

All of which begs several questions: Do the changes Spence is in the process of making include a safer car to operate as his primary mode of transportation? As the father of two daughters, is he more cognizant of the out-of-the-ring responsibilities that go along with family? Is this possible with the financial freedom to indulge the familiar rich-boys-and-their-toys craving for six- and even seven-figure motorized status symbols that successful athletes have come to regard as a rite of passage?

"Right now I got a big 4x4," he said. "It's kind of like a tank. I'm laying off the really fast cars. Sometimes when I'm at a stoplight, I have flashbacks (to the accident). I think, 'What if somebody swerves into my lane and hits me?' Stuff like that. I'm a little paranoid about driving really fast cars at this point.

"But who knows? Maybe in the future I'll get another fast car. Right now, though, I'm not buying any car with just two seats."

James hears his fighter's note of caution, which makes sense because the crash of Errol Spence Jr.'s Ferrari actually is a cautionary tale that newcomers to hefty bank accounts and a perceived Top Gun-level need for speed continue to ignore.

"That I don't know," James said when asked if Spence might again yield to the temptation to treat himself to a zippy and splashy ride. "I don't talk to Errol about that. But he knows what happened. Still, there is a tendency to forget things as time goes by. I just hope he remembers that he could have been another Salvador Sanchez or that other kid on the motorcycle (former WBO welterweight titlist Paul "The Punisher" Williams, paralyzed from the waist down by a crash in 2012)."

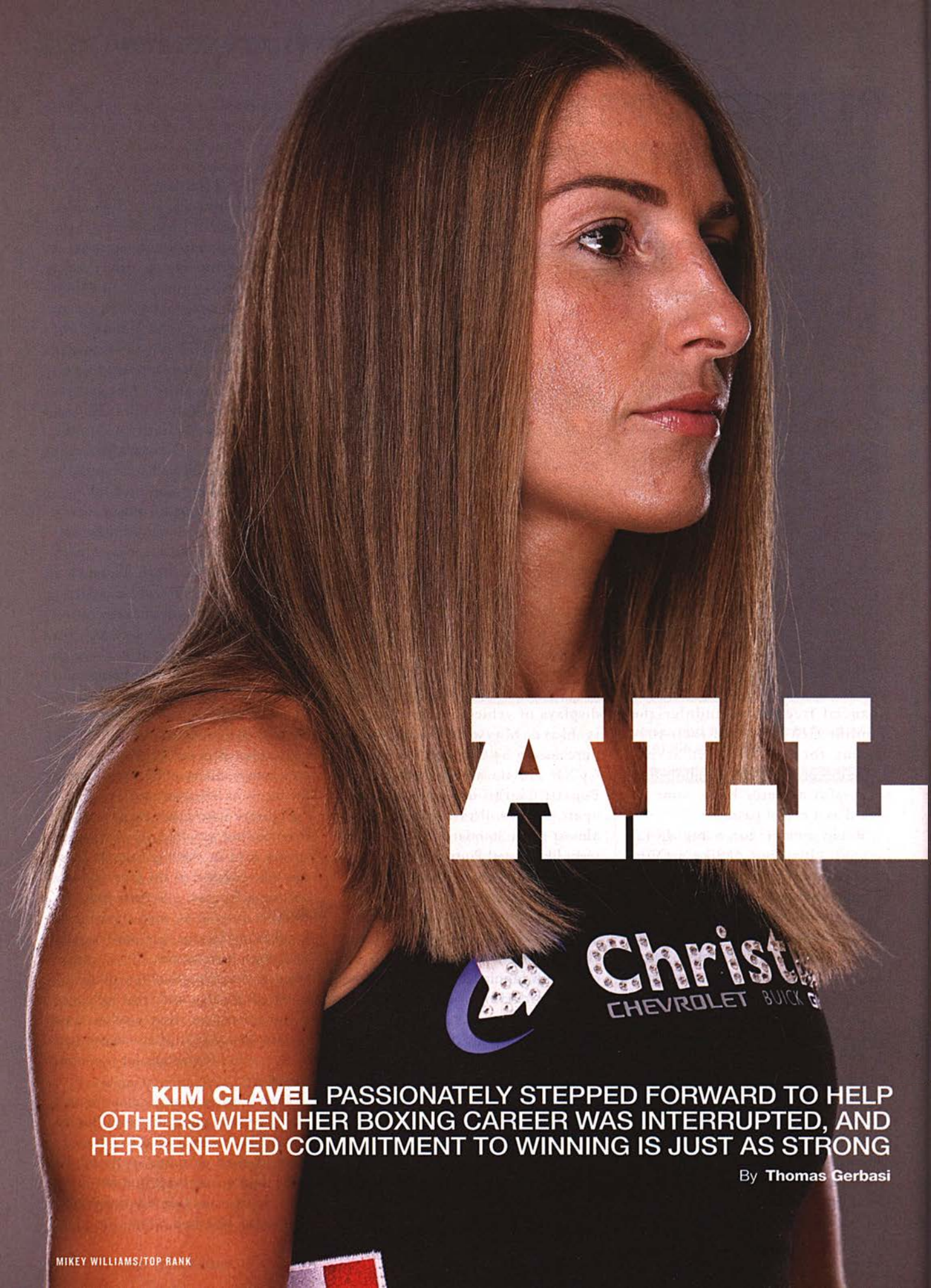
The gold standard – uh, make that the diamond standard – for boxers inclined to make ostentatious displays of vehicular extravagance is Floyd Mayweather Jr., who purchased a $4.8 million Koenigsegg CCXR Trevita and a $3.8 million Bugatti Chiron only a few weeks apart. Floyd's ultra-luxury chariots almost make standard-issue Ferraris seem like rusted Pintos.

Nor is the itch to gun the engine and take off like a bat out of hell restricted to famous athletes and actors like Paul Newman, James Garner and Steve McQueen, all of whom fancied themselves to be race car drivers. Even otherwise milquetoast stockbrokers desire to experience life in the fast lane and they always have, as evidenced by a story authored by David Forman in the September 17, 1973, issue of Financial Review. Detailing a meeting of the Porsche Owners' Racing Association, which was founded in 1967, Forman observed that "it looks like rush hour on Wall Street. Porsches everywhere, and all being driven hard by angry young men, with no regard to road rules, or basic courtesy. You can practically smell the testosterone in the air."

And if day traders can feel that way, what must it be like for world-class athletes? It's like an imaginary force field surrounds elite performers when they settle into the driver's seat of a powerful sports car or climb aboard a motorcycle as if they were reincarnations of Evel Knievel. But being greatly skilled in a particular sport does not guarantee protection while engaging in risky activities, which is why many NFL, NBA and MLB teams have it written into the contracts of their star players that they are not allowed to engage in skydiving, swimming with sharks or, yes, the riding of motorcycles. Former Duke University basketball star Jay Williams, the No. 2 pick in the 2002 NBA draft, had such a clause included in his rookie contract that prohibited him from operating or even being a passenger on motorcycles. He, of course, chose to surreptitiously ignore the clause and tore up his knee when he crashed his Yamaha YZF-R6 into a streetlight. Now a broadcaster for ESPN, he never played in the NBA again and took a huge financial hit for violating the terms of his contract.

Fighters who can't be dissuaded from putting very fast, very expensive sports cars in their garage at least can take comfort in the fact that any automobile, even a Ferrari that can go from zero to 60 mph in the time it takes to hiccup, are statistically safer than motorcycles. But of course none of that matters when alcohol is involved. Driving under the influence is dangerous no matter what type or how fast a vehicle is – speed just adds another ingredient for potential tragedy.

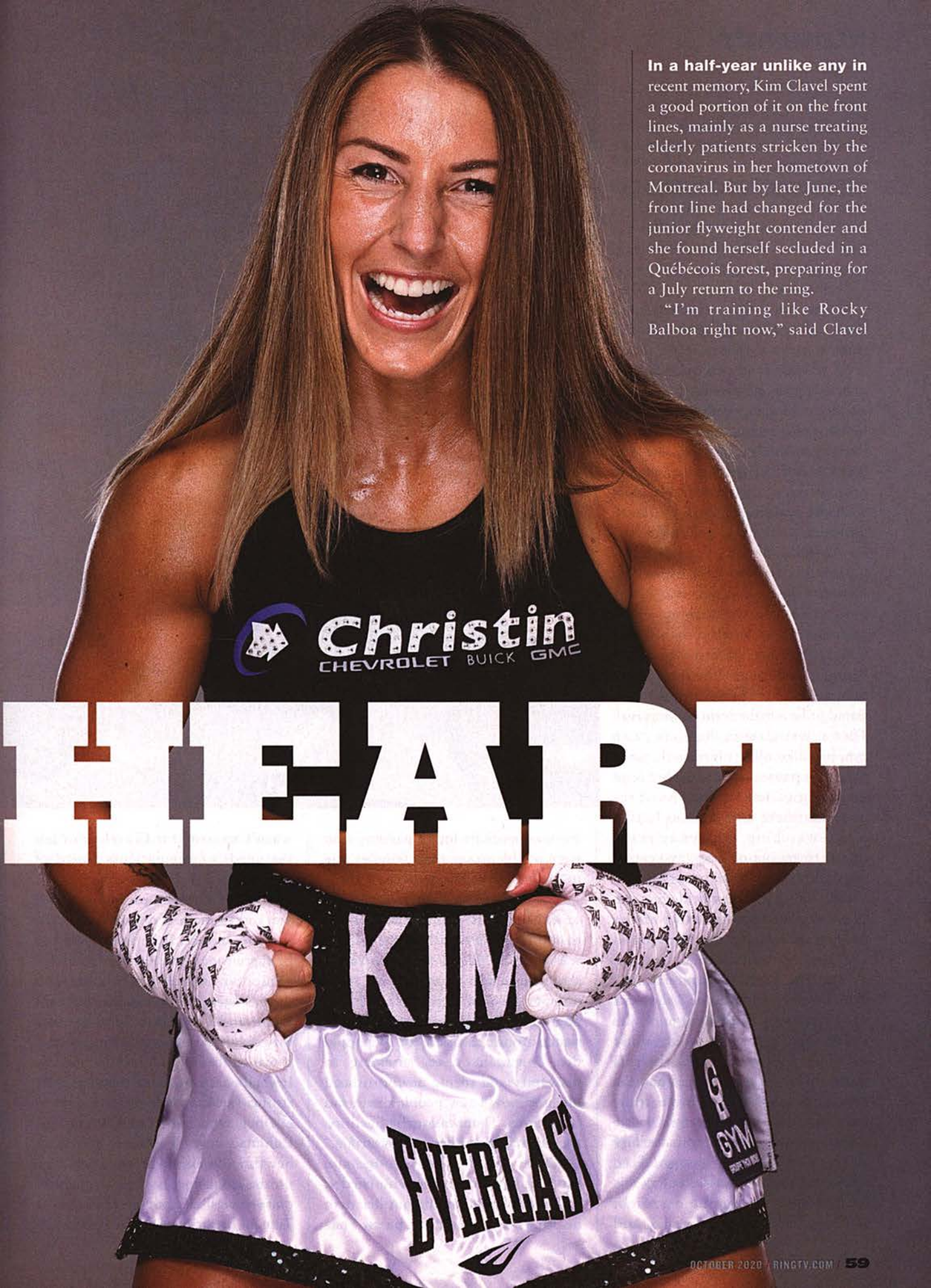
There always is an element of risk for those who enter the ring. But, as Errol Spence Jr. and other boxers have learned at times, it might be safer than going for a Sunday drive in a car that has a speedometer that goes up to 200 mph.



KIM CLAVEL PASSIONATELY STEPPED FORWARD TO HELP OTHERS WHEN HER BOXING CAREER WAS INTERRUPTED, AND HER RENEWED COMMITMENT TO WINNING IS JUST AS STRONG

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

MIKEY WILLIAMS/TOP RANK



HEART

In a half-year unlike any in recent memory, Kim Clavel spent a good portion of it on the front lines, mainly as a nurse treating elderly patients stricken by the coronavirus in her hometown of Montreal. But by late June, the front line had changed for the junior flyweight contender and she found herself secluded in a Québécois forest, preparing for a July return to the ring.

"I'm training like Rocky Balboa right now," said Clavel

when The Ring caught up to her. "I'm in training camp and I'm far away from Montreal."

Does that mean some wood chopping by the 108-pounder?

"I'm chopping trees, I have a kayak, I'm mountain climbing, running, everything."

She pauses.

"I was running after chickens, too," she laughs, showing that her Rocky game is truly on point.

More importantly, Clavel was back in her element and couldn't be happier, a welcome development during a time when smiles are in short supply and stress is at an all-time high. And that was just for the majority of people around the globe who had to deal with the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. For others, like the 29-year-old Clavel (11-0, 2 KOs) after her March 21 bout with Esmeralda Moreno was called off, everything took on a whole new meaning.

It was going to be a major step forward in Clavel's career. Mexico's Moreno had fought the best of the best, held a world title, and this was slated to be a main event in Montreal. Then it was gone in the blink of an eye, just like all professional sports forced to pause. Clavel had her brief mourning period for the loss of the bout, but there would be no Netflix binge-watching, no ready-made excuse to get out of shape and eat all the things professional boxers should not be eating. As the world changed, Clavel decided to return to her former day job as a nurse, this time to aid COVID-19 patients.

"I'm the kind of person that I can't do nothing at home," she said. "My fight was canceled, yes, I was sad for one or two days, but I don't like negativity. I want to help; I want to make a difference. I had the competence to do it, and it was really important for me to do it, too."

Used to working in the maternity ward, Clavel was assigned to retirement and elder care centers this time around, picking up overnight shifts wherever she was needed. And she was needed a lot by patients who were unable to see their families due to the infectious nature of the virus.

"That was really hard," Clavel said. "The first month I went back to work in the elderly center, and I was shocked. Honestly, I was really shocked by what I saw. There were old people alone, the Alzheimer's patients didn't understand the situation and I saw a lot of people die. I was used to working in maternity and seeing newborns and life, and now I saw people die in sad conditions. That was really hard for me mentally, and I had to stay strong."

While she stayed strong, she brought light to people who needed it the most, even as she put her own health at risk on a daily basis. That wasn't an issue for Clavel, who put the needs of her patients ahead of her own.

"I tried to stay positive, and I worked to make a difference and be there for people," she said. "I had to be there for them, because they were alone. So I was there talking with them, singing with them, dancing with them, and I was just there because they didn't have their children around. It was really important for me to help. It's a vocation inside of me that's strong. I need to help others."

Once word got out that one of Canada's best boxers was filling up her time during lockdown to work on the front lines, it was no surprise that she was selected to receive the Pat Tillman Award for Service at the 2020 ESPY Awards. That recognition was a light in a dark time for Clavel, just as she provided light for those who needed it, some in their final hours.

"It was not an easy part of my life, but I know that I found a strong side inside of me and I know it will help me in my future in my boxing matches and in my life," said Clavel, who got the news a few weeks later that her boxing career would resume in Las Vegas on July 21. Her opponent would be unbeaten prospect Natalie Gonzalez (6-0, 1 KO) in an eight-round bout, but the name and scheduled distance didn't matter to the Canadian, who was training as if it were a championship fight. And it might as well have been, because from here on out, all eyes will be on a fighter from a country not exactly known as a hotbed for women's boxing.

Sure, longtime world champion Jelena Mrdjenovich has always done well in the Great White North, Olivia Gerula has been in with several of the sport's biggest names and unbeaten junior middleweight titleholder Marie-Eve Dicaire proudly calls Canada home. But beyond that, there's plenty of space for Clavel to fill in, and she's learning how to do that after an amateur career that included seven national championships.

"I already had credibility as an amateur boxer, so I was able to get attention from the Canadian promoters," she said of her early days in a pro career that began in 2017. "But amateur boxing and professional are two different things. I saw that as a professional, it was more business. You have to sell tickets, you have to be in the media, and it's different. It's more money, but my passion is the same."

Luckily, Clavel has plenty of quality opponents in and around her weight class, she is promoted by the respected and well-connected Yvon Michel and her story has already drawn in an audience that goes far beyond the hardcore boxing fanbase. In other words, all the pieces of the puzzle are there for her to be a star. All Clavel has to do is win. And she did so against Gonzalez, winning a shutout on the scorecards.

"I have a little attention now because of my ESPY award, but now I want attention because of my skill in the ring, too," she said. "That's what I want to prove, and the next year is going to be a big one. I'm not too far from a title fight. And in flyweight, light flyweight and minimumweight, we have a lot of potential and we have a lot of good fighters. It's challenging, and I like it."

Spoken like a true fighter, in and out of the ring, and the kind of person who reminds you that in a world turned upside down, there are still good people out there. Living that life isn't easy, but Clavel embraces it.

"I'm really comfortable to be a role model, and if I can inspire only one little girl, my goal would be complete," she said. "So that's important for me. I don't think about the pressure. I just do everything with passion and motivation, and I just want to live my present moment. That's really important. And if I can inspire a couple people in women's boxing and open some doors for the next generation, I would be the happiest girl on Earth."

Clavel outclassed Natalie Gonzalez over eight rounds in her U.S. debut on July 21.

The WBA welterweight title and reputation as the sport's most destructive puncher changed hands when Pipino Cuevas and Thomas Hearns clashed in Detroit 40 years ago.

THE DAY 'THE HITMAN' WAS BORN

THE AUGUST 1980 SHOWDOWN BETWEEN FEARSOME PUNCHERS **PIPINO CUEVAS** AND **THOMAS HEARNS** SPAWNED A NEW WELTERWEIGHT STAR AND MARKED A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

By **Lee Groves**

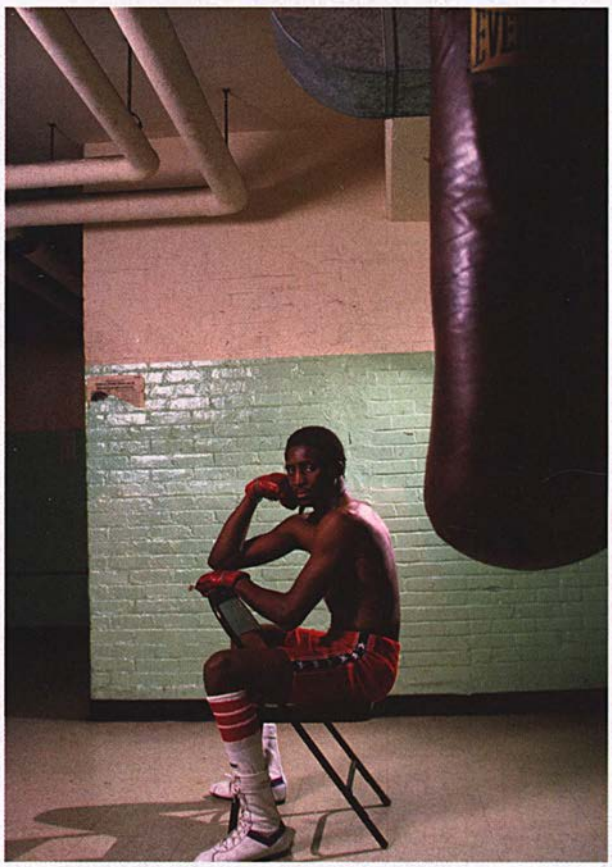
Forty years ago, Thomas "The Hitman" Hearns more than lived up to his nickname by producing one of the most sensational title-changing rubouts of the 1980s. His destruction of WBA welterweight champion Pipino Cuevas inside Detroit's Joe Louis Arena not only vaulted Hearns to the roll call of world titleholders, it also re-energized his economically ravaged adopted hometown, established him as a legitimate threat to the division's other superstars (WBC counterpart Roberto Duran and recently deposed champion Sugar Ray Leonard), and completed a historic reshuffling of the WBA's balance of power.

When dawn broke on Saturday, August 2, 1980, three of the organization's longest-reigning Latin titleholders were scheduled to risk their belts in two different locations against a trio of dangerous, hard-hitting challengers. The first was Colombia's Antonio Cervantes, who had been the WBA's 140-pound titlist for all but 15 months since October 1972. The seventh defense of his

second reign and the 17th of his championship arc was to take place in Cincinnati, Ohio, the hometown of challenger Aaron Pryor, whose wild, whirlwind attack and fiery temperament stood in stark contrast to Cervantes' cerebral polish and regal composure.

Fueled by a feverish crowd as well as by his own deep-seated resentment of an establishment he felt had pushed him down for years, "The Hawk" sprinted from his corner and swarmed the South American from start to finish. Except for a flash knockdown produced by a sneaky counter right to the jaw late in Round 1, the 26-year-old challenger dominated the 34-year-old veteran. A left hand opened a gash under Cervantes' right eyebrow in Round 3 while a thunderous right cross produced the 10-count knockout in Round 4. For Pryor, it was a most cathartic experience; he finally achieved the world championship that had been denied him at his natural weight of 135 pounds, and that fury would eventually earn him a plaque inside the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1996, his first year of eligibility. Cervantes would join him two years later, but his induction occurred a full decade after his theoretical first year of consideration. One factor for the delay may well have been his relative inaccessibility to U.S. audiences (he fought just six times in America), but another could have been his shattering loss to Pryor – his only nationally televised appearance on U.S. soil.

Not long after he declared Pryor the winner and new champion, ring announcer Jimmy Lennon Sr. boarded a plane and flew to Detroit to work the other two WBA title matches. Puerto Rico's Samuel Serrano, the organization's 130-pound champion since October 1976, was making the 11th defense of his reign against Japan's Yasutsune Uehara, whose only previous title challenge was a two-round KO defeat to Filipino Ben Villaflor – the man Serrano dethroned. For these reasons, Serrano was expected to easily outbox the Japanese challenger, but that fight would not take place until after the night's main event: Cuevas vs. Hearns.



Hearns, a pure boxer as an amateur, developed his legendary power as a pro.

A well-worn boxing axiom is that "punchers are born, not made," but Hearns may well have been history's most prominent exception. As a spindly amateur, Hearns used his exceptional height and reach to build a 155-8 record that included just 12 KOs, a microscopic percentage.

"As an amateur, he was just a super boxer," said late manager-trainer Emanuel Steward. "He'd jab, jab, jab, fire his right, then dance away. He didn't know what a left hook was and he didn't know what leverage was. Then he started to grow and started to learn. The power was always there, only he didn't know how to use it."

But once Steward taught Hearns how to produce maximum torque with his legs and torso, as well as how to snap his fist at the point of impact, the "leg boxer" became a bomber of the highest order. The transformation was remarkable: He began his career with 17 consecutive knockout victories, the first 14 of which were scored within four rounds. The victims in this streak included celebrated journeyman Jerry Strickland (KO 3 in Hearns' second pro bout), future world title challenger Bruce Finch (KO 3) and 72-fight veteran Clyde Gray (KO 10), whose three previous title shots included a two-round TKO loss to Cuevas in 1977. Forty-fight veteran Alfonso Hayman snapped Hearns' KO streak by losing a 10-round decision, but Hearns ran his record to 28-0 (26 KOs) by crushing, among others, Harold Weston (TKO 6), future 140-pound titlist Bruce Curry (KO 3) and former titleholders Saensak Muangsurin (TKO 3, the next-to-last main event at the legendary Olympia Stadium), Angel Espada (TKO 4) and Eddie Gazo (KO 1). Although Hearns was viewed as the personification of Detroit's hoped-for urban renaissance, the Gazo fight drew a tiny crowd of 1,500.

"The reason is simple," wrote The Ring's Allen Rosenfeld in the July 1980 issue. "There aren't many boxers near his weight class who can last more than a few rounds with him. And the fans know it. But

as of this writing, there is talk that Pipino Cuevas is coming to town to risk his WBA title against Thomas. And if that happens, it will take Tiger Stadium to accommodate all those who will want to be there. Because, as the veteran Detroit fight expert Louie Marudas has said: Give Detroiters an attraction, they'll come out in droves."

While Tiger Stadium couldn't be secured for the August 2 date – the hosting Tigers crushed the Seattle Mariners 9-3 before 23,278 fans that night – 11,500 gathered inside Joe Louis Arena to see a card that included Randall "Tex" Cobb's slugfest with Earnie Shavers, Hilmer Kenty's WBA lightweight title fight against South Korea's Young Ho Oh and, of course, Serrano-Uehara and Cuevas-Hearns. Still, the arena was only half-filled because of the combination of exorbitant ticket prices ($500 ringside, $25 for the nosebleeds) and a highest-in-the-nation unemployment rate. Still, the fight qualified as an event because of Hearns' deep ties to Detroit, the crowd's ear-splitting energy and Cuevas' considerable merits.

Entering this match, Cuevas was one of the most accomplished – and one of the most fearsome – fighters in the sport. When he crushed Angel Espada to capture the WBA welterweight title in July 1976, Cuevas, at 18 years, 207 days, not only was (and remains) the youngest fighter ever to win the 147-pound title, he also was (and still is) the youngest Mexican world champion and was the second-youngest boxer behind Wilfred Benitez ever to win a world title to that point (he is currently the fourth-youngest behind Benitez, Cesar Polanco and Ratanapol Sor Vorapin).

Cuevas turned pro at the astonishingly tender age of 13 years, 325 days and lost via second-round KO to Alfredo Castro. As a boy fighting grown men, Cuevas continued to struggle as he lost three of his first six and five of his first 12. Starting in May 1974, the 16-year-old Cuevas steadied the ship and won eight in a row before dropping a 10-round decision against Andy Price just 45 days before challenging Espada for the world title. Given the Price loss, Cuevas was viewed as an afterthought entering the Espada match, but the youngster, fighting before his home-nation fans in Mexicali, scored the stunning second-round stoppage.

Despite his extreme youth, Cuevas wielded ungodly punching power, especially in his massive left hook. The punch broke countless speed bags in the gym – including two during a public workout two days before the Hearns fight – and caused multiple opponents to incur facial fractures. Espada suffered a broken jaw in each of his two subsequent title fights against Cuevas, as did Harold Weston Jr. (who also sustained broken ribs before being stopped in Round 9 of their March 1978 fight). Former welterweight titleholder Billy Backus was forced to retire in Round 2 – then from the sport altogether – after Cuevas broke his orbital bone two-and-a-half months after bludgeoning Weston. When asked years later whether he felt bad about the extreme damage he inflicted on opponents, Cuevas, after taking a moment to ponder the question, replied, without a trace of malice, "No."

Cuevas' unsmiling, stone-faced visage and no-nonsense answers only added to the menace he exuded. For him, that mix was enough for him to become a box-office star. He reportedly attracted 7,000 fans to a public workout, and his fights produced rapturous whoops from the audience as he connected with hook after hook.

As the pile of title-fight victims grew higher, so did Cuevas' regard within the boxing community. In the Big Book of Boxing's March 1979 issue that judged fighters on a 1-10 scale in 10 categories, Cuevas' 92.0 score rated seventh, just a half-point behind Muhammad Ali and trailing the likes of Roberto Duran, Wilfredo Gomez, Alexis Arguello, Carlos Zarate and Miguel Canto – Hall of Famers all. A dream match between Cuevas and WBC counterpart Carlos Palomino made for interesting debate, but that pairing never got past the preliminary stages.

Cuevas' 11 successful title defenses ranked only behind Henry Armstrong's 19 for the longest string in a single welterweight championship reign at the time (Jose Napoles accumulated 14 in two tenures and Felix Trinidad would notch 15 during his reign). Only Randy Shields managed to last the full 15-round distance, a result so stunning given Cuevas' reputation that the cover of the December 1979 issue of International Boxing called it "Shocker in Chicago: Cuevas Goes the Distance!"

Cuevas bounced back strongly with a 10th-round TKO over Espada in their third and final meeting, then met South African trickster Harold Volbrecht in Houston on ABC in April 1980 – his U.S. network television debut. With WBC counterpart Sugar Ray Leonard watching intently at ringside – a unification fight between Cuevas and Leonard was tentatively set for May 16 – commentator Howard Cosell accurately described the slow-footed but heavy-fisted Cuevas as "a lower-weight George Foreman." The pesky challenger scored well with left crosses and quick flurries in the first four rounds, but the unflappable Cuevas asserted his power with startling suddenness in Round 5 with a thudding right to the chest, then a swooping counter hook to the chin that caused the challenger to fall to the floor in sections. The latter blow was all Cuevas needed to score the 10-count knockout.

"He punches like a heavyweight; I'm deeply impressed with Pipino," Leonard told Cosell during a ringside post-fight interview in which Cuevas was also present. When Cosell asked Leonard if he was awed by what he saw, Leonard replied, "Not a bit," then jokingly

covered his eyes with his left hand. The blow apparently was enough to persuade the WBC titleholder to forego the unification bout with Cuevas in favor of a big-money showdown with former lightweight champion Roberto Duran, scheduled for June 20 in Montreal's Olympic Stadium, while Cuevas turned his focus toward Hearns.

Cuevas-Hearns was billed as "World War II," for many believed that the Duran-Leonard fight staged six weeks earlier was the proverbial "World War I" of the welterweight division – a brutal, punishing battle of wills in which the previously undefeated Leonard was beaten by the very best version of Duran that had ever stepped between the ropes. The boisterous hometown crowd – as well as the closed-circuit audience that watched throughout North America – expected another pitched battle between the lanky challenger and the stoic champion.

Listed between 6-foot-1 and 6-foot-2½, Hearns towered over the 5-foot-8 Cuevas, and the American's 78-inch reach was eight inches longer. He also owned considerable advantages in hand speed, mobility and combination punching, but Cuevas possessed a world of experience at the highest level of the sport as well as a bona fide eraser in his fearsome left hook. Hearns scaled 146 at the morning weigh-in – after reportedly working out at Detroit's Oriental Health Spa and Hair Chateau – while Cuevas weighed a solid 146½.

Though known for his concussive cross, it was an early exchange of hooks that allowed Hearns to establish his dominance. Just 10 seconds into the fight, both men cranked up their lefts and Hearns, who pulled the trigger first and faster, connected with such force that he drove Cuevas three steps backward. The power of that hook was enough to persuade Cuevas that the best course of action was to get on his bicycle and try to outbox Hearns while the challenger quickly shifted into predator mode.

Moments after Cuevas missed with a flapping hook, Hearns answered with a crisp cross to the champion's temple that further electrified the already pumped-up crowd. Another right to the side of the head caused Cuevas to stumble, and yet another cross caused the champion to bounce off the ropes.

Within the space of 70 seconds, Hearns had seized total physical and psychological command of the contest. He, the 21-year-old challenger, looked hulking and dangerous while the 22-year-old champion with the leaden fists and deep pedigree was befuddled, rattled and outgunned. At times his face flinched at the sight of an incoming cross, and soon his entire focus was on self-preservation.

"Hearns is giving Cuevas a boxing lesson," observed blow-by-blow commentator Don Dunphy shortly before the two-minute mark, and a few seconds later a 14-punch explosion highlighted by several crunching crosses confirmed that the challenger was administering a punching lesson as well. Only Cuevas' cast-iron chin – another one of his defining assets – enabled him to remain on his feet.

Adding to Cuevas' woes was the fact that his leather-soled shoes failed to produce sufficient grip while Hearns' rubber-soled shoes allowed him to dig his toes into the canvas and generate maximum power.

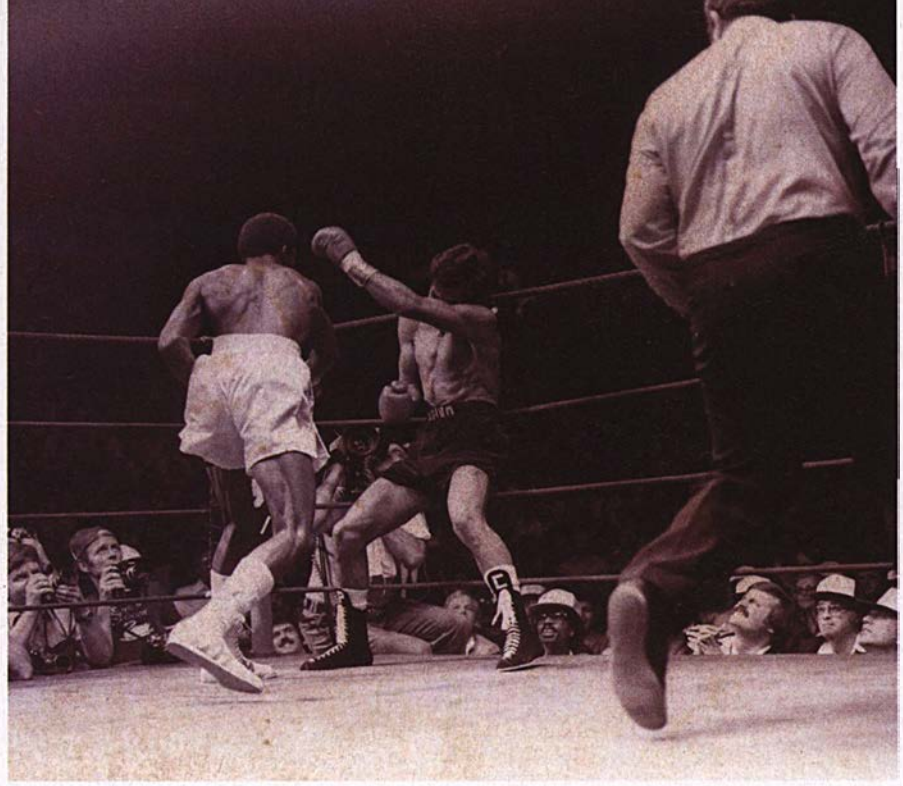
A trademark cross over Cuevas' low left caused the champion to skitter along the ropes, and only Hearns' voluntary throttle-down allowed for an opportunity to reach the bell. Meanwhile, Hearns' piston-like jabs cut through Cuevas' guard with stunning ease, and those jabs set up a final pair of right hands that ended a dreamlike round for the challenger and three minutes of turmoil for the champion.

In the space of a few minutes, Hearns validated every accolade. He was a well-schooled offensive machine who exploited his physical gifts to the maximum, and he proved against Cuevas that, at least in the early rounds, he was a championship-level competitor. Meanwhile, the scope of Cuevas' futility in the face of Hearns' command suddenly caused longtime observers to question whether he was a genuinely great champion or one who had greatly benefited from intimidated, subpar challengers. Shields enjoyed several strong moments against Cuevas, but he lacked the firepower to fully take advantage. Hearns was about to prove that he was different.

Although chief second Steward was yelling for Hearns to hook to the body, Hearns was striking Cuevas' head with such ease that he didn't feel the need to include the flanks in his attack. However, Hearns did mix in an excellent right uppercut before launching a fusillade that totaled nearly 30 blows. Cuevas, perhaps making a last stand, exchanged freely with Hearns for the first time in the bout, but all his slower and wider punches did was disturb the air around the challenger's head.

With 38 seconds remaining in Round 2, the two fighters extended their left arms at center ring – Hearns to keep Cuevas at bay and Cuevas to pump in several light jabs and a pushing hook. Once they broke free, Hearns drew a bead with a touch jab, then stepped in with a concise cross that connected with full flushness. Upon impact, Cuevas' legs corkscrewed underneath him, but he improbably retained enough muscle control to regain his balance and keep his feet. That balance lasted only a split-second longer, however, as Hearns then lunged in with a second right that left the champion flat on his face.

Referee Stanley Christodoulou immediately began his count, and it looked for all the world like it would be superfluous. But at five, Cuevas snapped out of his slumber, surveyed his surroundings and arose. At eight, Cuevas was on his feet but stumbled back a couple of steps, and his dazed expression and bedraggled look



Hearns dominated the shell-shocked Cuevas from start to early finish.

indicated the end was near.

Thanks to Cuevas' manager, Lupe Sanchez, that end came several seconds earlier than anticipated. Seeing his charge's compromised state, Sanchez climbed into the ring to tell Christodoulou that the fight was over. With just 21 seconds left in Round 2, Pipino Cuevas' four-year reign as titleholder had come to a most humbling end.

"I knew how much time was left," Sanchez said. "I don't care about that. I can't measure Pipino's life in seconds. The life of a fighter is worth more than a title, or 20 titles. It is better to stop a fight at the right moment than to be kneeling at a funeral."

Cuevas, who did not object to Sanchez's move inside the ring, graciously congratulated Hearns at the post-fight press conference.

"You are a very good fighter, and I have no excuses," he said. "I had 12 title defenses. I hope you will be as good a champion as I was."

Cuevas' grace in defeat was greatly appreciated by Hearns, who returned the favor in an interview printed in the October 1980 issue of The Ring.

When asked if he was surprised that Cuevas arose from the knockdown, he said, "If it had been anybody else, I would have been surprised. But Cuevas had been known for having a great chin. But listen, we're all human, and when that kind of punch hits you, like the right I hit him with, a man has to drop. It would have frightened me if he didn't fall!"

The stoppage ignited a tidal wave of celebration inside the ring and out. A tearful Hilmer Kenty, who had retained his WBA lightweight title by ninth-round TKO earlier in the evening – locked Hearns in a long embrace and was among dozens who charged inside the ring to celebrate with the new champion.

Even before dethroning Cuevas, Hearns established a long-term goal of becoming boxing's first four-division titleholder. He fulfilled that mission by stopping Juan Domingo Roldan to win the vacant WBC middleweight title in October 1987 and added a fifth divisional belt – the newly established WBO super middleweight title – by beating James Kinchen by majority decision two fights later. Hearns was elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2012, his first year of eligibility.

As for Cuevas, he never returned to his previous heights. After a pair of early KO wins over Bernardo Prada and Joergen Hansen, he lost four of his next five and eight of his final 14 to finish with a 35-15 (31 KOs) record. Normally, a champion who boasted the long-term dominance of Cuevas would have been immortalized in Canastota at the first opportunity, but the ignominious nature of the Hearns loss combined with his subsequent decline resulted in his not being inducted until 2002, seven years after his first year of eligibility.

The day of explosive title-changing knockouts ended with the Serrano-Uehara fight, and while Hearns' conquest of Cuevas could be seen from the bout's opening seconds, Uehara's victory was an out-of-the-blue shocker. After being thoroughly outboxed by the slick Puerto Rican for five rounds, Uehara cranked up a right hand that caught Serrano on the point of the chin in the closing moments of Round 6. The glassy-eyed Serrano tried mightily to arise, but he pulled himself upright a split-second after referee Luis Sulbaran counted 10. The time of the KO was 2:59 and all three scorecards entering the sixth read 50-45 for Serrano, who was the victim of The Ring's Upset of the Year.

Three right hands, three knockout victories and three new champions. What more could boxing fans have wanted from a day? For that reason, August 2, 1980, will be remembered as one of the most theatrical and tumultuous days in boxing annals.

Lee Groves is a boxing writer and historian based in Friendly, West Virginia. He is a full member of the BWAA, from which he has won 19 writing awards, and has been an elector for the International Boxing Hall of Fame since 2001. He is also a writer, researcher and punch-counter for CompuBox, Inc., as well as the author of "Tales from the Vault: A Celebration of 100 Boxing Closet Classics" and the co-author of "Muhammad Ali: By the Numbers." Groves can be reached at l.groves@frontier.com.

BUNDINI: DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

ROBERT RIGER

A NEW BOOK ABOUT **DREW BUNDINI BROWN** PROVIDES AN INTIMATE LOOK INTO THE LIFE OF BOXING'S GREATEST HYPE MAN

By **Todd Snyder**

Drew Bundini Brown wasn't a boxing trainer; not in the traditional sense. He never boxed as an amateur or as a professional. Not once. Yet Bundini was a fundamental part of Muhammad Ali's success.

"Bundini was, no joke, the reason Muhammad won a lot of bouts that he otherwise might have lost; he pushed him to the limit, both in training and in the championship rounds," Rahman Ali, Ali's brother, wrote in his recent autobiography.

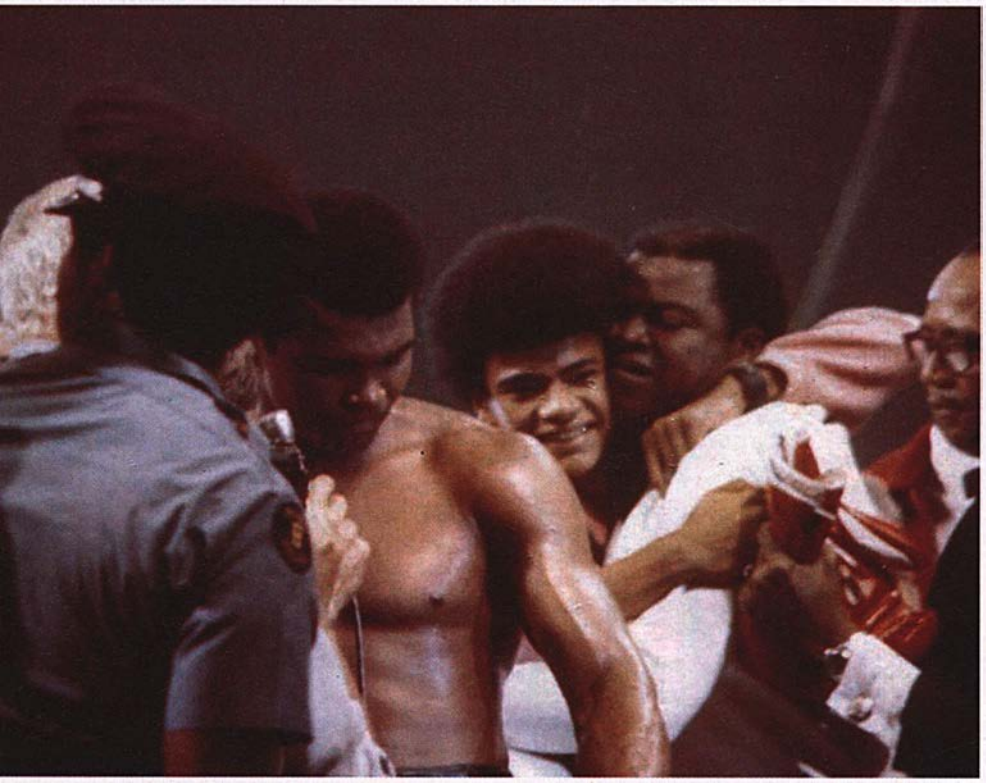
Bundini was more than a fringe member of Muhammad Ali's entourage. He was a constant, if not dominating, voice in Ali's corner, working 44 of Ali's 61 professional bouts. Aside from Ali's first bout with Floyd Patterson, Bundini was present for all of Ali's most significant fights.

"When they got together, they were

Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn," Khalilah Camacho-Ali (Ali's second wife) once said to me, outlining the spirit of adventure and camaraderie the two men shared during their improbable journey.

With respect to training, Bundini worked side-by-side with Ali, waking him up for morning roadwork and shadowing him in the gym for every workout routine. Bundini was an important piece of the puzzle.

"I think Bundini was the source of Muhammad Ali's spirit," two-time heavyweight champion George Foreman said to me. "I wouldn't even call him a trainer or cornerman – he was more important than a trainer. Ali had an unmeasurable determination and he got it from Bundini."



Drew Brown III celebrates with his father after Ali stopped Jerry Quarry.

In his lifetime, Bundini would play the role of master motivator to two of the greatest boxers in history. Before ever meeting Muhammad Ali, Drew Bundini Brown worked as a member of Sugar Ray Robinson's entourage, a partnership that lasted seven consecutive years. The common denominator between these legendary champions is Bundini. Unbeknownst to many casual boxing fans, Bundini also worked with former welterweight champion Johnny "Honey Boy" Bratton, as well as heavyweight contenders Jeff Merritt, George Chuvalo, and James "Quick" Tillis.

To pretend that Bundini was nothing more than a hype man, in the negative sense of the term, is to undermine his place in boxing history. He was more than a lackey. Bundini's contributions to Ali's legacy were both motivational and stylistic. The poetic side of Ali's prefight routine was taken to new heights when Bundini joined the fray. Few people know that it was Bundini who coined Ali's legendary catchphrase, "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."

In giving us the simile that would forever encapsulate the way we think of Ali's graceful fighting style, Bundini helped shape the idea of Muhammad Ali.

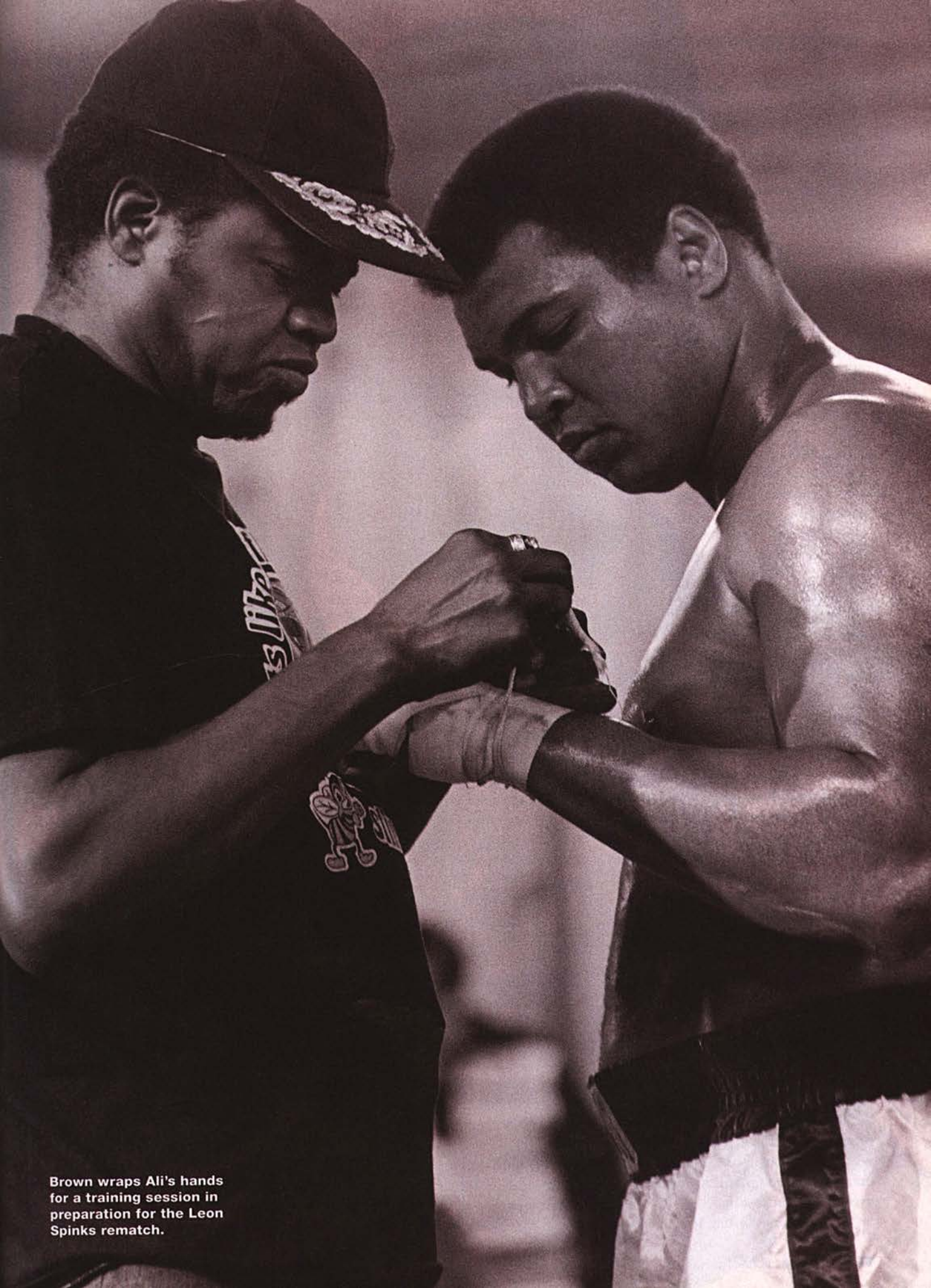
Aside from his work with Ali, one could argue that Bundini was a cultural icon in his own right. As an actor appearing in six feature films, Bundini made a unique imprint on popular culture. His biggest contribution would come through his recurring role as the Harlem gangster "Willy" in Gordon Parks' iconic *Shaft* franchise, a groundbreaking series of films that would give rise to the so-called blaxploitation genre.

Later in life, Bundini would deliver a cameo performance, alongside Oprah Winfrey, in Steven Spielberg's adaptation of Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*. Bundini was also a featured character in *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali*, published by DC Comics in 1978. Name another cornerman who can say he has worked with Sugar Ray Robinson, Muhammad Ali, John Shaft, Oprah Winfrey, Steven Spielberg and Superman! Drew Bundini Brown lived an amazing American life, one that not even the best Hollywood writers could have invented for the silver screen. An intense exploration into Bundini's wild and unpredictable life is long overdue.

The following excerpt from *Bundini: Don't Believe the Hype* touches on the final meeting between Ali and his poetic sidekick, a touching moment where the roles in their dynamic friendship were reversed.

Very little has been written about the circumstances surrounding Bundini's death. Even less has been written about his final years in Los Angeles. What has been written, however, paints a grim picture. The pervasive notion is that a ratty motel room located near downtown Los Angeles, living quarters only a meager step up from homelessness, served as the setting for the final chapter of Bundini's life. He was broke, alone, and suffering from depression, writers have suggested. In my conversations with Muhammad Ali's close friend Victor Solano, however, he clearly looked to push against this depiction.

"Drew lived at a couple of different places. One near Fremont and one in Hollywood. The one in Hollywood was a two-story motel. It had fluorescent lights. I remember Drew's room was upstairs. The first apartment



Brown wraps Ali's hands for a training session in preparation for the Leon Spinks rematch.

Drew Bundini Brown (as Willy) in a scene from the 1971 film *Shaft*.

(in Fremont) was downstairs. Both rooms were clean. I remember his room had red carpet. When we would go pay his rent, Muhammad would hand me the money and I would go pay. He would always sit with Drew while I paid. It was not filthy. All of this stuff saying he was destitute isn't true. Ali loved him unconditionally. He wasn't alone. At the time, we had Ali coming to the gym to work out (as a method of combating Parkinson's). Drew often came with us. We knew he was hitting the bottle pretty hard. Ali talked to him about it. There may have been other drugs, but we didn't see it. Sometimes there would be empty Seagram's bottles on the table or under the bed. I remember seeing a Bible on the nightstand. But Muhammad made sure the maids would clean. We would pay for the week, probably $200 to $250 a week. Sometimes we would bring Drew to the gym with us. When we picked him up, he'd always be outside, cleaned up, waiting on us. He was always punctual.

"You can't write that after boxing was over with, Drew's life ended sadly. You can't say that, Todd. It would anger me!" Solano pleaded. "Muhammad was there to show his loyalty. Drew showed his loyalty to Muhammad while he was alive and Muhammad tried to return the favor, even though the disease was beginning to take over. Muhammad was helping take care of him in Los Angeles. He was doing it to show his appreciation for Drew being there and taking the punches with him. Ali would tell me, 'Drew is my motivator.' He would always say that. Muhammad made sure [Bundini] had a roof over his head, that he had food to eat. He would give the maids and the front desk workers an extra $100 bill and tell them to make sure Drew was eating."

"Anytime Muhammad heard that Drew was in trouble or something, we quietly – and I use the word 'quietly' because Muhammad helping Drew didn't please a lot of people – Ali's wife at the time and others that are now gone. It didn't please them that Muhammad would give money to Drew. But Muhammad would quietly sneak off with me and we would check on him. I know there are people who probably feel Muhammad should have done more. But Muhammad did what he could. Muhammad's financial situation wasn't in the best shape at the time," Solano continued.

When I shared Solano's comments with Drew Brown III, he struggled to contain his emotions, offering the following assessment of his complicated personal relationship with the greatest fighter of all time: "I fell in love with Cassius Clay when I was 9 years old. And he fell in love with me. We were like best friends for a period of time. From the beginning, I saw his love for my father and my father's definite love for him. With success, people change. It was hard for me to watch him take advantage

of his friend, my father. Unknowingly and perhaps unwillingly, he allowed that to happen. But he always held a special love for me. He looked at me in a special way. He was fun, brash, full of life. My frustration came in him allowing my father to get to that point. It hurt. I've been through a lot. But in the end, I love my big brother."

On September 3, 1987, Drew Bundini Brown was found unconscious at the bottom of the staircase leading to his second-story Los Angeles motel room. Bundini was allegedly drunk, fell down the staircase and suffered a variety of head and spinal injuries as he tumbled to the ground. He was alone at the time of the fall.

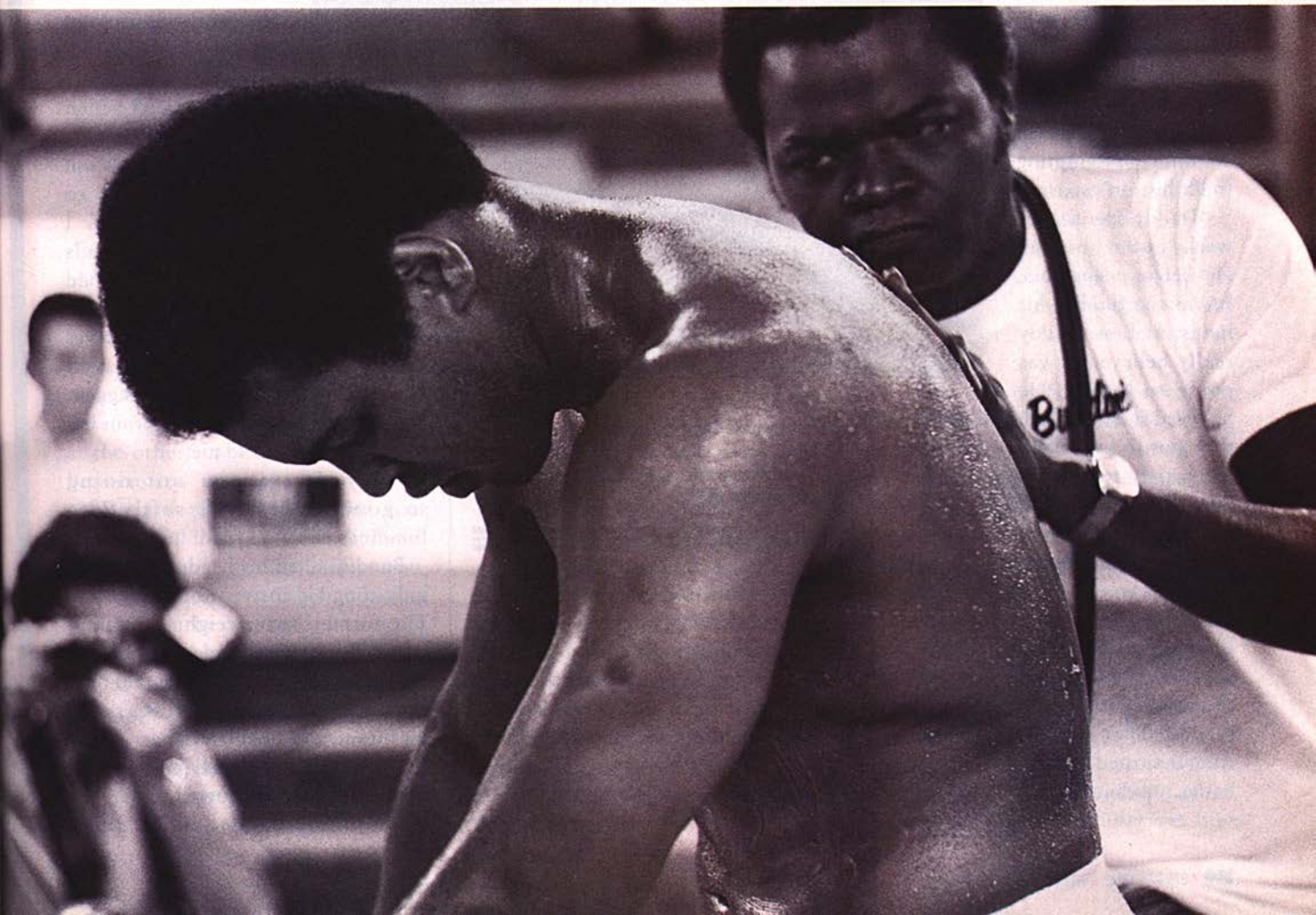
Bundini was found by a motel maid, who called for an ambulance. According to the paramedics, Bundini had laid at the bottom of the steps over 10 hours before being discovered. His lungs were full of fluid, the damage to his spinal cord irreversible. He was taken to Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles. Within hours of Bundini being transported, the bad news found its way to Muhammad Ali.

"We were at the gym. Someone had called and said that something happened to Drew. Me and Muhammad and Howard (Bingham) went straight down to the motel. Drew had already been taken to Good Sam. When we arrived at the motel there were many conflicting stories and reports. Confusion. It seemed to us like they were not saying exactly what happened. It was like somebody was trying to protect themselves. The maid said that Drew had been drinking. They said he had fallen forward. When they found him, his arms were under his chest. They said that because he was diabetic there was no circulation. That was the worst thing that could have happened to a diabetic," Solano told me, continuing to grapple with his own emotions.

Later that afternoon, at Attack Squadron VA-35, located in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Lieutenant Drew Brown III was called into the office of Commander Lou Lalli.

"Commander Lalli told me the bad news and said that the situation was dire. And, at that point, we didn't know how much time Daddy had left. They gave me a jet to go to California. He gave me a jet to go see Daddy. I flew myself to California," Drew said.

When Drew arrived at the hospital, still dressed in his Navy flight gear, he was told by doctors that the fall had rendered his father a quadriplegic. Before entering the room, doctors warned Drew that his father lay in a Stryker Critical Care bed, with a metal halo fixed around his head and neck. The bed moved in four directions, laterally, then side-to-side. The bed was designed to keep Bundini's bodily fluids moving. The fall had broken his



Ali gets a rubdown from Brown after a workout in 1974.

spine but not his spirit.

"My father was quadriplegic, with a halo on his head, talking more shit than anybody that I've ever heard in my entire life," Drew recalled.

"We good, son. It's OK," Bundini whispered as Drew arrived at his bedside. Overcome with emotion, his son began to sob. Recognizing his anguish, Bundini attempted to comfort his boy.

"My feet moving, son?" Bundini asked.

"No, Dad. They aren't moving," Drew answered, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Yeah, they are. We gonna be OK. I'll be riding a bicycle by the end of the week," Bundini chuckled.

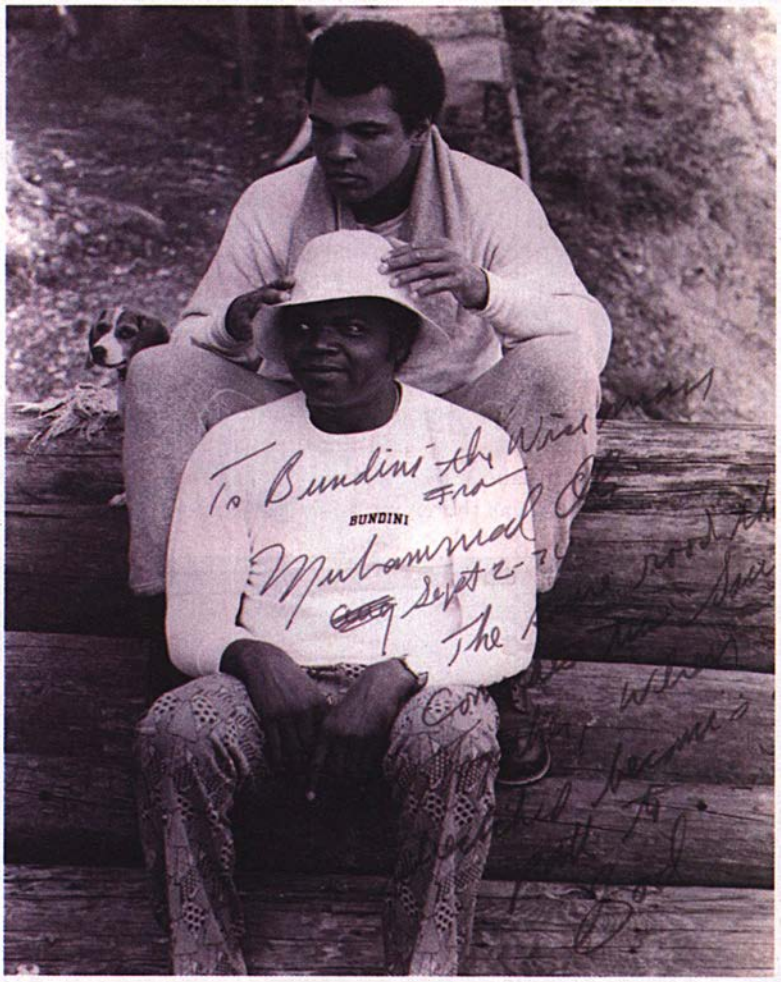
The joke was humorous on multiple levels. Drew had never seen his father ride a bicycle.

"Where that cute blonde nurse at? Tell her to come back in here. I want to give her a little pinch," Bundini continued, attempting to lift his son's spirits.

"Daddy spent three weeks in the hospital. He died of pneumonia. It was the fluid in his lungs. At first, Daddy really believed it was going to be OK. He believed it. And I did too. But when they put the tubes down his throat, when they took away his ability to talk, things went downhill rapidly. At one point, my father looked at me, without saying a word, and spoke to me clear as a bell: 'Listen to me carefully. Do not shut this machine off now, because this might work, but you will not let your father live like this, boy. Do you understand what to do?' That's what Daddy's look communicated to me. He didn't want to die, not that moment. But that look said everything I needed to know," Drew recalled.

One week before Bundini passed away, Muhammad Ali arrived at Good Samaritan Hospital to visit his old companion. Ali was accompanied by his close friends Victor Solano and Howard Bingham.

"I placed the call to Good Sam," Solano said to me. "They told us Drew was not in good shape at all.



Brown was an integral part of Ali's inner circle, always by his side as an enthusiastic assistant trainer and confidant.

They told us to be prepared. He was quadriplegic. They said it was going to be very difficult to see him that way. They said for a diabetic the lack of circulation is not a good thing. Things manifest pretty quickly. I told Muhammad, 'We have to go before it is too late.'"

When the trio arrived at the hospital, Solano witnessed something he had never seen before: Muhammad Ali turning down autographs.

"When we made it to Drew's room, Howard (Bingham) turned to me and said, 'I can't go in. I don't want to see him like that.' We got to the doorway; you could see Drew through this little window. Howard started shuddering. He walked away. He repeated, 'I can't go.' It kind of shocked me. This guy had done everything with Drew, but it was clear that he couldn't stomach it," Solano remembered.

Ali and Solano entered the room while Bingham remained in the hallway. Inside the room, Drew was seated in the corner, resting in a visitor's chair. After exchanging pleasantries, Drew exited the room. Bundini's son uncharacteristically ignored the presence of his world-famous big brother. The pain and disappointment he felt simply cut too deep.

"Muhammad quietly went up to Drew (Bundini). I walked to Drew's right and Muhammad walked to his left. Drew opened his eyes and looked from right to left. He looked at both of us. His eyes shifting from left to right," Solano told me.

"Hey, Drew, you not doing so good?" Ali spoke softly into Bundini's ear.

Bundini tilted his head right to left, indicating his answer to the question. The former heavyweight champion lifted Bundini's hand and held it. Bundini attempted to speak but, because of the breathing tubes down his throat, was unable to do so.

"Quiet, Drew," Ali continued, asking a nurse for a towel.

The nurse handed Ali a damp

"'DREW IS MY MOTIVATOR.' (ALI) WOULD ALWAYS SAY THAT." - VICTOR SOLANO

washcloth from a bedside tray.

"My turn to wipe your sweat off," Ali said, patting Bundini's forehead gently.

Bundini attempted to smile. For a few minutes, Ali sat next to his cornerman and said nothing, occasionally applying the damp cloth to Bundini's forehead. Ali leaned in, positioning his mouth next to Bundini's left ear.

"Man, just think, you're gonna be up there in heaven with Shorty," Ali said. "You're going off to meet Shorty. And I'll be up there one day too. When you get up there, you're gonna see Jack Johnson, and Rocky Marciano, and all them great fighters up in heaven. And one day you are going to see me," Ali continued, his voice shaky.

Ali held his own hand to Bundini's cheek. He wanted his trainer to feel his physical presence. Bundini began to cry, heaving slightly. Ali stroked Bundini's hair, running his fingers through the bald spot. After a few moments of silence, Ali bent down and kissed Bundini on the forehead. Seated at the other side of the bed, Solano began to cry.

"We are going to pray for you, Drew. We all love you so much, Drew. Shorty is going to take care of you, Drew," Solano repeated before kissing Bundini on the forehead, just as Ali had done moments earlier.

After a few moments of stony silence, Ali arose from his seat. Solano did the same. Ali bent down one last time, leaning into Bundini's ear.

"Drew, can you hear me?" Ali asked.

Bundini once again tilted his head to indicate his response.

"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. ... Rumble young man, rumble," Ali said, before adding the trademark ending to the slogan.

"I remember, he did it twice. Slowly. 'Ahhhhh. Ahhhhh,'" Solano told me.

With tears forming in the corners of his tired eyes, Bundini attempted to smile. Muhammad Ali turned and exited the hospital room. He would never see Drew Bundini Brown again.

"Out in the hallway, we couldn't find Howard. As we were looking for him, this doctor came up to us and said Drew's condition was bad. He let us know that it wasn't going to get better. Then he said there is this teenage boy next door to Drew, he had this very rare case. If you touched his skin, it would literally fall apart. But the doctor told us he liked boxing and asked if Muhammad would go in there," Solano said.

"Where's this boy wants to box me? They said he looks like Joe Frazier. C'mon, boy," Ali shouted upon entering the room, playfully shadowboxing.

The boy instantly smiled.

"You have to get better. That's my order. And when you do, me and you have to fight. You get better and I'm going to get back in shape," Ali continued, unwilling to let the boy know that he felt deep sympathy for his condition.

"The doctor said he had never seen him smile. They were so happy that Muhammad visited with him," Solano recalled.

After visiting the boy, Ali and Solano glanced back into Bundini's room, peering through the hallway window.

"Drew's eyes were closed, he looked settled down. He was OK. I wanted his son, Drew Brown III, to know that his father was OK. He was surrounded by nothing but love, all the way to the end," Solano urged.

The hospital visit made a significant impact on Muhammad Ali, who at this point in his life had lost only a handful of people who were close to him, Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad being the primary exceptions. Before leaving Los Angeles to embark on a goodwill tour in Pakistan, where he visited mosques, shrines, schools, hospitals, orphanages and government offices, Ali, Solano and Bingham also paid a visit to Sugar Ray Robinson, who was living out the final days of his life in Los Angeles, suffering the effects of Alzheimer's disease.

When Ali and Solano entered the living room of Robinson's home, the legendary fighter at first recognized only Solano.

"Ray, you've always been my main man," Ali said to the boxing legend.

Robinson did not reply.

During the visit, Ali, Solano and Bingham talked mostly with Robinson's wife, Millie. Bingham, shook up over the day's events, forgot to bring film for his camera. Solano gave him the film out of his own camera so that Bingham could document Ali's final meeting with Robinson.

When it was time to leave, Ali briefly browsed Robinson's living room trophy case, admiring the championship belts, medals, and memorabilia. Solano recalls seeing tears in Ali's eyes through the reflection of the trophy case.

"I'm going to be like that someday. I know it. Just like that. I'm going to die just like that. I'm not going to know anybody. Just like that," Ali said to Solano after exiting Robinson's residence.

Sugar Ray Robinson would die two years later, on April 29, 1989, at the age of 67.

WORLD BEAT

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

After several months abroad for training, Mike Plania finally was able to return home on July 9. When he touched down in General Santos City, he went straight home for a mandatory two-week quarantine. But he could take comfort in knowing he'd returned home in a much better situation in his career.

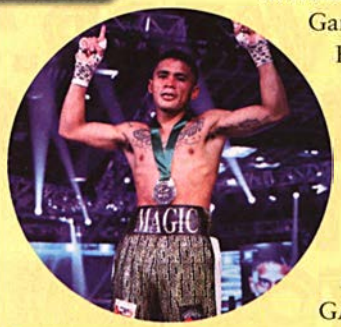
According to promoter Jim Claude Manangquil, Plania (24-1, 12 KOs) was not in fighting shape when he took the Joshua Greer fight on three weeks' notice, having not been able to train fully while on lockdown in Miami during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the junior featherweight fringe contender knew that, given the circumstances in the world, another opportunity may not come for a while.

On June 16, Plania pulled off the first upset inside "The Bubble," Top Rank's sequestered arena at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, dropping The Ring's No. 7-rated bantamweight twice before winning a majority decision. The 23-year-old says he could have done even better with a full training camp. "If I had been given enough time for my training … maybe knockout," said Plania.

Plania is one of the lucky Filipino fighters who are able to get in the ring. With pro boxing halted in the Philippines since March, only fighters who have visas to go abroad can get in the ring. So while Plania and his Sanman gym mates who are based in Miami all have fights scheduled, other notable fighters, like IBF junior bantamweight titleholder Jerwin Ancajas, have been inactive.

Ancajas, whose mandatory defense against Jonathan Rodriguez has twice been delayed, is unable to get to the U.S. because the U.S. embassies around the world have been closed. Instead, he's keeping in shape at his Survival Camp compound in Cavite province and has joined the Philippine Navy SEALs for training until he's able to get to the States.

It's a situation similar to what Ring/WBA/IBF bantamweight champion Naoya Inoue is facing in Japan. Inoue has been unable to get to the U.S. for his postponed unification bout with WBO titleholder John Riel Casimero, who had been training in Florida and Nevada for several months, separated from his family. Casimero had expressed interest in getting back home to be with his daughter but has agreed to stay if he can get a tune-up fight by October.



Mike Plania

Giemel Magramo (24-1, 20 KOs) has had his vacant WBO flyweight title fight against Junto Nakatani pushed back several times and now looks set to fight on August 21 in Tokyo. The Japanese embassy in Manila remains closed, however, and Magramo and team will likely have to quarantine for two weeks upon arriving in the country, if they can eventually get in.

Mark Magsayo, The Ring's No. 6-rated featherweight, was one of the lucky ones who got his paperwork done before the world turned upside down. The 25-year-old from Bohol province arrived in Los Angeles on July 1, though it took a letter from MP Promotions president Sean Gibbons to get on to the plane from Manila. Magsayo (20-0, 14 KOs) hasn't fought since last August but is expecting to be back in the ring in September or October on a Premier Boxing Champions card.

For now, Magsayo is back at the Wild Card Boxing Club training with Freddie Roach and doing conditioning work with Justin Fortune. Fortune is working on optimizing Magsayo's diet while Roach dissects Magsayo's style and corrects his mistakes.

"I'm thankful to coach Freddie," said Magsayo. "I need a coach that will correct me and add to my skills."

Perhaps soon fighters won't need to travel just to get a fight. The Games and Amusements Board has been working to craft guidelines after the country's COVID-19 task force added boxing to the list of sports that can return under modified conditions. GAB chairman Abraham "Baham" Mitra tells The Ring that among the conditions expected to be rolled out are a maximum of 10 people allowed in the arena at one time, and fighters won't be able to travel to different regions of the Philippines due to varying quarantine conditions among higher- and lower-risk areas.

But without a paying crowd (which basically didn't exist before the pandemic) and the country's major TV network ABS-CBN being put out of business by the government in a politically charged refusal to renew their operating license, promoters likely face the prospect of spending for cards that few if anyone will see.

For the time being, Plania is in no rush to get back. The fight was a challenging one, particularly late, and he still has yet to make up his mind about whether he'll try to get down to the 118-pound limit full-time or return to his more natural weight of 122 pounds.

"We're gonna take our time," said Manangquil.

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

South African boxing has had its share of in-and-outers, fighters who could disappoint but also thrill their fans. The consistency may have been missing, but when they were on their game, they produced some epic victories.

Super middleweight Thulani "Sugarboy" Malinga and heavyweight Corrie Sanders spring to mind.

These were their greatest nights:

Thulani Malinga SD 12 Nigel Benn – March 2, 1996

When Malinga braved a hostile U.K. crowd to challenge Benn for his WBC super middleweight belt, very few gave him a chance, even though he appeared to do enough when they met four years earlier (Benn was awarded the decision by the referee).

Since their first encounter, their careers had taken different trajectories. Benn won his second world title right after their first fight and defended it nine times, his title reign including a draw with Chris Eubank and a knockout of Gerald McClellan.

Malinga, on the other hand, was knocked out by Roy Jones. And even though he was on a five-fight winning streak since then, it was mostly against local opposition. He had failed in three previous world title attempts and was considered old, whereas Benn was a major star.

None of that mattered on the night. Malinga boxed brilliantly, moving side-to-side, sticking Benn with his jab while picking him off at a distance. Benn always had the power to be dangerous, though, and he served notice of that in the fifth round. Malinga was busy raking him with power shots when Benn finally uncorked a huge right that dropped the South African flat on his back. The crowd went wild, but Malinga got up and composed himself. It was to be Benn's last big moment in the fight. Malinga continued to outbox him, punctuating his dominance by scoring a flash knockdown in the last round.

Malinga had been the victim of many robberies during his long career, and when the scorecards were announced and one of the judges somehow managed to score the fight for Benn, that ugly specter once again reared its head. Fortunately, sanity prevailed, and the card was overruled by the other judges. In his fourth attempt, "Sugarboy" was finally a world titleholder, and he did it on the biggest stage in the backyard of a formidable champion.

Corrie Sanders TKO 2 Wladimir Klitschko – March 8, 2003

Corrie Sanders started off as a hot newcomer on the heavyweight scene, racking up a 23-0 record with solid wins over the likes of Johnny Nelson and Bert Cooper before suffering a shock knockout defeat at the hands of journeyman Nate Tubbs. He dusted himself off and recorded another 13 wins to re-establish himself as a player but then lost to future champion Hasim Rahman in 2000, getting stopped in seven rounds after having Rahman in trouble early. He would fight just twice over the next two-and-a-half years, and his career seemed all but over at the age of 37.

Suddenly, opportunity came knocking when he was brought in as a substitute to challenge WBO titleholder Wladimir Klitschko in Germany. Klitschko was considered the heir apparent to Lennox Lewis, who was one fight removed from retirement. Unsurprisingly, no one gave the southpaw with the lightning hands much of a chance.

Sanders did not waste time, exploding in the first round. Two consecutive lefts flush on the jaw put Klitschko flat on his back, shocking the crowd into silence. Klitschko got back on his feet with a bewildered look on his face, cut above the left eye. Sanders jumped on him, landing another left followed by a storm of blistering punches that sent Klitschko slumping back to the canvas. He made it to his feet and was saved by the bell.

The minute rest period was not enough to get the Ukrainian out of the fog, and Sanders continued where he left off. Klitschko simply could not get out of the way of Sanders' southpaw left, and another one of those deposited him on the seat of his pants. He somehow got up, but the follow-up attack from the South African sent him back, face first, to the canvas. The referee had seen enough and waved the fight over at the 0:27 mark.

Just like that, Sanders was the new WBO heavyweight titleholder.

With the victory, he became the third South African to win The Ring's Upset of the Year award, joining the company of Gerrie Coetzee and Vuyani Bungu.

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FISTS OF FURY AT 40

Forty years ago, on July 13, 1980, Matthew Saad Muhammad made the fourth defense of his WBC light heavyweight title against dangerous contender Yaqui Lopez, a fighter he had defeated two years prior. In the rematch, the Mexico-born challenger from Stockton, California, forced Muhammad onto the defensive with a brutal early assault and built up a commanding lead on the scorecards. The action reached a crescendo in a glorious eighth round that saw both men rock the other with terrific combinations. It was Lopez, however, that emptied his tank, and Muhammad put the finishing touches on an incredible comeback to win by stoppage in Round 14. The bout received Ring Magazine Fight of the Year and Round of the Year (Round 8) honors for 1980. It was arguably the greatest 175-pound title fight of all time.

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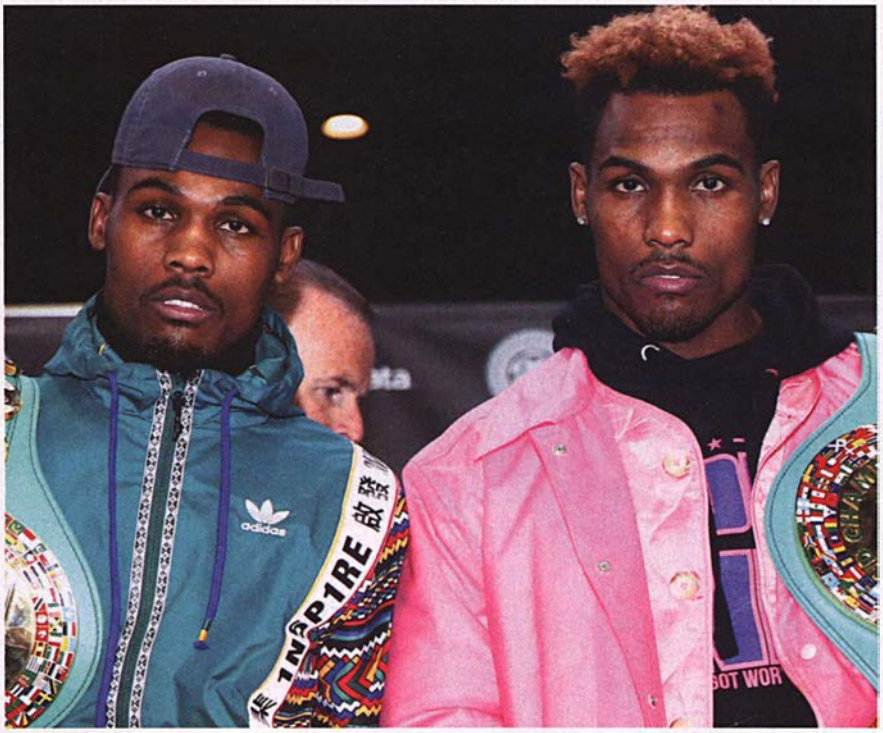


Jermell (left) and Jermall Charlo co-headline a six-bout Showtime Pay Per View card on September 26. Jermell will face Jeison Rosario for the vacant Ring 154-pound title

AUGUST

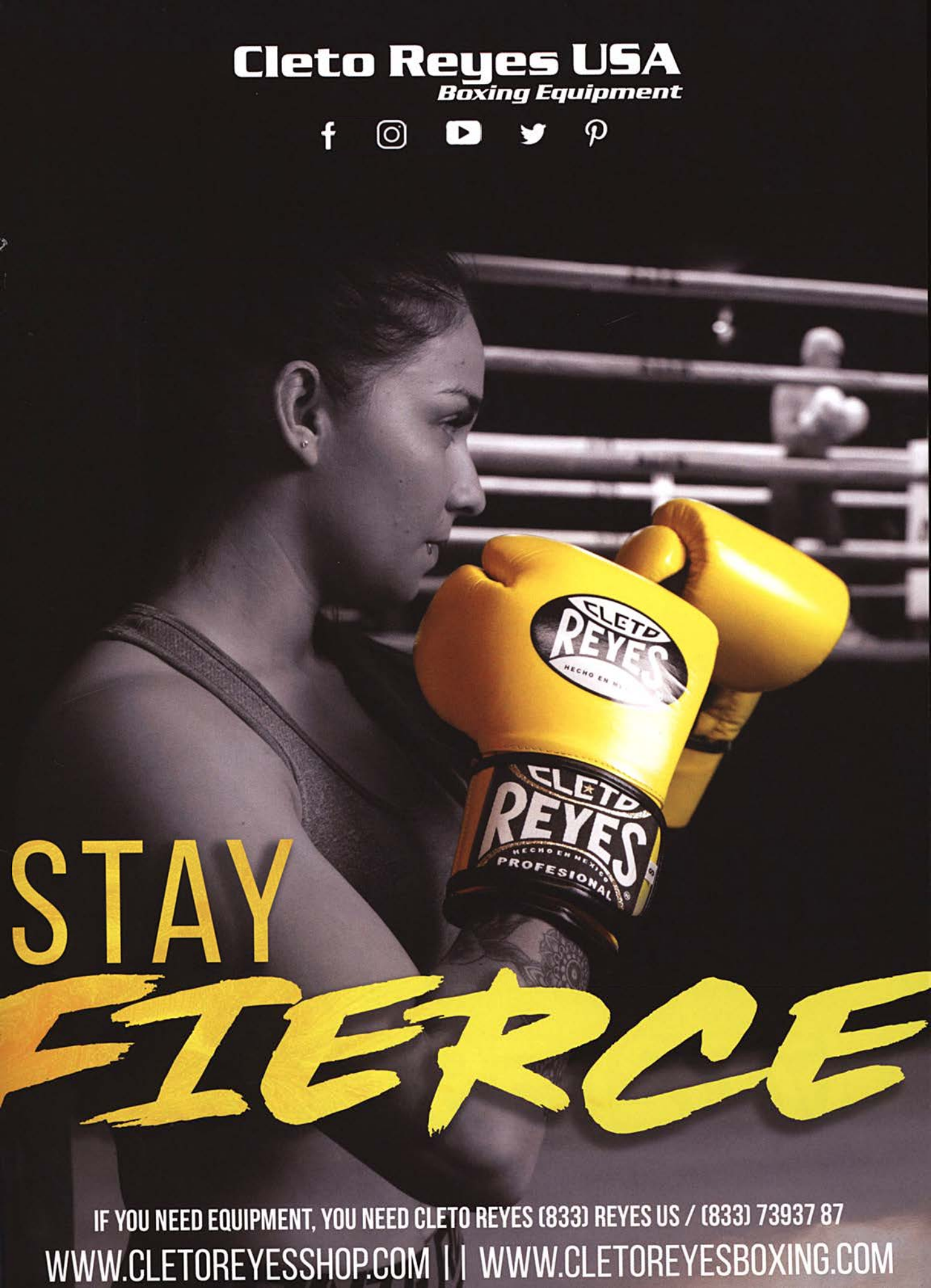
AUG. 15 – Cecilia Braekhus (Ring No. 1 P4P female) vs. Jessica McCaskill, welterweights (for Braekhus' IBF/WBA/WBC/WBO titles), Tulsa, Oklahoma (DAZN).
AUG. 22 – Dillian Whyte vs. Alexander Povetkin, heavyweights, Brentwood, England (DAZN, Sky). Also, Katie Taylor vs. Delfine Persoon, lightweights (for Taylor's Ring/IBF/WBA/WBC/WBO titles).
AUG. 22 – Eleider Alvarez vs. Joe Smith Jr., light heavyweights, Las Vegas (ESPN).
AUG. 28 – Jorge Linares vs. Javier Fortuna, lightweights, Indio, California (DAZN).
AUG. 29 – Jose Ramirez vs. Viktor Postol, junior welterweights (for Ramirez's WBC/WBO titles), Las Vegas (ESPN).

SEPTEMBER

SEPT. 19 – Erickson Lubin vs. Terrell Gausha, junior middleweights, Uncasville, Connecticut (Showtime).
SEPT. 26 – Jermall Charlo vs. Sergiy Derevyanchenko, middleweights (for Charlo's WBC title), Uncasville, Connecticut (Showtime/PBC pay-per-view). Also, Jermell Charlo vs. Jeison Rosario, junior middleweights (for IBF/WBA/WBC titles and vacant Ring championship); Brandon Figueroa vs. Damien Vasquez, junior featherweights; Mario Barrios vs. Ryan Karl, junior welterweights.

OCTOBER

OCT. 3 – Lee Selby vs. George Kambosos Jr., lightweights, Cardiff, Wales (Sky).
OCT. 10 – Sergey Lipinets vs. Kudratillo Abdukakhorov, welterweights, Uncasville, Connecticut (Showtime).
OCT. 17 – Lewis Ritson vs. Miguel Vazquez, junior welterweights, Newcastle, England (Sky).
OCT. 24 – Gervonta Davis vs. Leo Santa Cruz, lightweights (for Davis' WBA lightweight/Santa Cruz's WBA junior lightweight titles), Uncasville, Connecticut (Showtime/PBC pay-per-view).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